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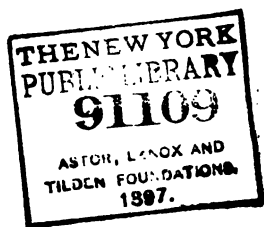
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THE
DOCTRINE
OF
ATONEMENT.

BY THE LATE REV. HENRY TURNER.
OF NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND.

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THE following tract presents the substance of two discourses, published since the death of their lamented author. In throwing them into one, it has been found necessary to omit a few passages, and to transpose another. In other respects no alteration has been made.

THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

THE subject of the present publication, is the doctrine of the atonement, according to the usual acceptation of that term, to signify satisfaction made to God for the sins of men, by the sufferings and death of Christ.

We shall be very anxious, in what we offer on this subject, to avoid everything like misrepresentation ; we shall therefore refrain from employing the language of its advocates, when it may be supposed that they have spoken unadvisedly, and have not intended that we should understand in a strict and literal sense the expressions which they have used. In return, we hope that our readers will rather judge by what will be now laid before them, than by the hasty and unfounded accusations which are so frequently brought against us by those, who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Observe, then, that Unitarians gratefully acknowledge, that the forgiveness of sins unto eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ ; and through him

alone. They glory in the cross of Christ ; they receive Christ as him who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ; nay, they believe in an atonement by Christ, *in the only sense in which that word is used in Scripture*. It is not the atonement of the world by Jesus Christ that we are used to controvert ; *but we deny that that atonement was effected by satisfaction*. There is no such word as *satisfaction* used in the whole New Testament ; and the word *atonement* is only to be met with in one place, in the New Testament, Rom. v. 11. " We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have also received the atonement." And in this place, if you consult the margin of the larger bibles, you will there find the word *reconciliation* substituted for it. " By whom also we have received reconciliation." And the best expositors understand the passage in this sense.

But, observe, the word *atonement*, when properly understood, has the same meaning as *reconciliation*. It is made up of two English words, *at* and *one*, with the termination *ment* ; now, *to be AT ONE*, is the same thing as to be in concord, to be united, reconciled ; and *at-one-ment*, signifies the state or act of being reconciled or united ; and is the same as reconcilement or reconciliation. So that in any passage where the word *reconcile* is used, we might, not improperly, adopt the word *atone*, as conveying the same meaning. For example, we might translate the passage in 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, thus ; " All things are of God, who hath atoned us to himself, by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of atonement, to wit, that God was in Christ, atoning the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses

unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of atonement : we pray you in Christ's stead be ye atoned to God." But then, this would not be any proof of the popular doctrine of atonement, for in this passage it is God who offers atonement to men ; and we are described as receiving the atonement ;— expressions that are altogether improper, according to the ordinary view of the doctrine, since the atonement is ordinarily considered as made to God, received by God, and offered on the part of men. In short, there is no word corresponding either to satisfaction or atonement in that theological sense, in the whole New Testament. Now I think we ought always to be suspicious of a doctrine which cannot be expressed in scripture language.

The arguments brought forward to prove the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, are of two kinds, 1st, Reasonings drawn from the proceedings of men in cases that are thought to be similar ; and 2nd, Inferences from Scripture.

I. Let us, first, *examine the grounds on which is argued the reasonableness of this doctrine.*

I believe that no one in this day will attempt to establish the necessity of a satisfaction for the sins of men, upon the ground of the mere wrath and anger of God, as an offended party, so as that he could not be appeased till he had wreaked his vengeance on some one who stood in the place of, and suffered the punishment due to the offender. These are sentiments most unfit to be attributed to the Almighty ; especially as he cannot possibly receive injury at the hand of any. "If thou sinnest, [says Elihu to Job] what doest thou unto Him ; if thou be righteous, what givest thou then, or what receiveth He at thine hand ? Thy wickedness

may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man." Indeed, it is now, I suppose, universally acknowledged, that God, even the Father, is the spontaneous source and original fountain of salvation. "The sacrifice of Christ," says a celebrated modern advocate of what are called orthodox views, "was never deemed by any who did not wish to calumniate the doctrine of atonement, to have made God placable, but merely received as the means appointed by divine wisdom through which to bestow forgiveness." Hence, it appears that all those representations of the plan of our redemption which attribute a principle of wrath and vengeance to the Almighty, until changed unto love by the satisfaction and merits of Christ, are, by the confession of all parties, unfounded in truth and reason.

It is also, I believe, universally admitted, that we cannot place the necessity for a satisfaction for the sins of men, upon the ground of the mere sovereignty of God, and his unquestionable right to do what he will with his creatures. In requiring punishment, he does not act the part of an arbitrary sovereign, who makes his will the law, and who forbids us to seek for a reason of his proceedings. God is a perfectly good being, and therefore cannot possibly take pleasure in the mere sufferings of his creatures. Reason shows the truth of what Scripture declares, that God "hath no pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth." Punishment is in itself displeasing to him.

In what quality, then, must we consider God as acting, when he decrees the punishment of offenders?—Certainly in the quality of a good and wise Governor, consulting for the public benefit, and intending the

maintenance of good order, and the vindication of the laws which have been placed to promote the welfare of those who are subject to them.

So far intelligent persons of every party, I believe, are all agreed. But now arises this question, Can such a governor as we have described abate, or in any instance dispense with, the penalties which by law attach to his offending subjects? It is said he cannot. — That, which is the most kingly and befitting attribute that belongs to earthly sovereigns, is withheld from the King of kings. He may not, it is said, in any instance exercise his merciful compassion, until the law (of which he is the sole enactor) is by some equivalent punishment satisfied, and its penal claims discharged.

Now, first, as to the reasonableness or justice of the expedient here supposed to be resorted to, in order to enable God, as the moral governor of the universe, to forgive offenders, can it be proved just, can it even be proved possible, to transfer guilt from one to another, so that the guilty shall escape, and the innocent be punished? Guilt is, in the nature of things, incapable of being transferred; and no principle of justice can demand, can even permit, that the innocent should be substituted for the guilty, as incurring the penalty of the law. Who ever heard of such a principle as a feature of human legislation? Even the tyrant Dionysius, when Damon generously urged him to put him to death in the room of his friend Pythias, started back from such a proposal, and forgave them both.

There are cases, no doubt, in which the innocent suffer in consequence of the crimes of the guilty; as when children are impoverished or disregarded, on account of the sins of their parents. However, we

ought to distinguish between sufferings and punishment. Who denies that an innocent person may suffer ? But can it with propriety be said that he is punished ? He has no consciousness of guilt ; he partakes of the consolations which flow from religion, and bears his sufferings with patience and pious resignation ; not like a criminal, overwhelmed with self reproaches, and agitated with bad and tormenting passions. Besides, there is here no substitution of the sufferings of the innocent for the punishment of the guilty. Bad parents, while they live, suffer for their crimes in their own persons, and are tormented by reflecting on the evils which they have brought upon their children ; and their crime, and consequent future punishment, must be aggravated, not remitted, by what their children suffer.

Another example is sometimes produced, in which it is thought that there is some resemblance to the satisfaction supposed to be made by Christ for the sins of men. It is when a person, who has become surety, under a pecuniary bond, for the good behavior of another, is made to forfeit the bond in consequence of that person's misconduct. But surely this is not to the purpose. The forfeiture of the bond is the just penalty of his own rashness, in pledging himself for the behavior of an ill-disposed person, to the detriment of the public ; and the forfeiture of the security does not release the offender himself, if he can be found, from the penalties which the law has affixed to his offence.

But supposing we were to grant it possible, and if possible then just, to impute guilt to, and inflict punishment on, one, as the means by which another might escape the punishment due to his crimes, can it be shown

that, in the case of the offences of men against the laws of God, it was necessary to resort to such a measure, in order that he may be enabled to release them from the penalties denounced against them? Is the Almighty debarred from a power which all law-givers exercise, of relaxing, when it is thought fit, the condition by which he binds to the observance of his laws? This cannot be maintained; for it must be admitted that the very thing supposed, viz. to accept of the punishment of a person substituted for the offender, is actually to alter the conditions originally appointed as sanctions of the law. In every community that ever existed under the dominion of law, there has always resided somewhere a power of abating and altering the penalties directed against particular offences. And who will take upon him to assert, even of an earthly sovereign, that it enhances the dignity of his person, or adds glory to his crown, to be set forth as an inexorable and unrelenting judge? Can it then be becoming to deny that the Almighty Ruler of all things is able to exercise his clemency? a clemency, which must far exceed everything of the kind that resides in the breasts of earthly potentates. It certainly, then, cannot be maintained, that, when the Almighty desired to forgive his offending creatures, there existed some necessity, that compelled him to exact the strict payment of penalties which he was otherwise disposed to remit; and that there was no way but that of requiring full satisfaction, through the sufferings and death of Christ, by which he could justly be merciful. — Indeed, it is acknowledged by several ancient Authors in the Christian church, particularly by Athanasius and Au-

gustine, that God might have saved us by his own will, without the intervention of Jesus Christ ; and Bernard asks, "Who knows but that the Almighty had the choice of various methods of our redemption, justification, and deliverance ?" From which it is evident that, in the opinion of these ancient fathers, the satisfaction made by Christ for the sins of men, was not essential to the forgiveness of sins.

It follows, from all these considerations, that the law of God is not of that irrevocable, implacable description which it is sometimes represented to be ; but that it may naturally be expected to admit of some relaxation, and not necessarily to require full satisfaction.

I will not however deny, that for the maintenance of good order in the moral universe, it is necessary that limits and conditions should be affixed to the exercise of the divine clemency, in the forgiveness of sins ; otherwise those laws which are designed for the welfare of his creatures will be neglected and disobeyed. But let us duly consider whether, if it be for no other object than to secure the reverence and obedience of mankind to these righteous laws, other limits and conditions may not be found, that will have at least as good a tendency this way. What if the necessary condition of forgiveness be a hearty repentance, and a strict amendment of life, will this have no tendency to enhance our veneration for that law which is declared to be the rock of our life and the necessary condition of our salvation ? Shall we say, That until a satisfaction for sin is provided, he that is sorry for his sins, is as much to be despaired of, as he that continues in them ? If "there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," does it not follow, that the holiest and most en-

lightened part of God's moral creation perceives no obstacle but impenitence in the way of the full exercise of mercy towards offenders? If it be otherwise, what explanation shall we find of many ample declarations which the Almighty has made in his holy word, of his will and power to save the penitent sinner? One remarkable passage, taken from the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, will suffice to impress the force of this argument. "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him. In his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked shall die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live? When the wicked turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die."—Now what exception can we possibly take to this passage of holy writ? Shall we dare to aver that the demands of justice are not satisfied by a course of proceeding which God has expressly declared to be his own; or does it not approve itself to reason, as calculated in every view to secure our reverence to laws established on such equitable and unimpeachable principles of wisdom and goodness?

II. Having thus examined the arguments which have been drawn from the nature of things, and from what we know of the natural principles of justice and equity,

to prove the doctrine of satisfaction, by the sufferings and death of Christ, and given many reasons why they do not appear solid or conclusive ; we shall now proceed to advert to *some of the arguments drawn from scripture.*

The doctrine of atonement for the sins of men, by satisfaction received from the sufferings and death of Christ, is argued from the comparisons made by the writers of the New Testament, between the death of Christ, and the sacrifices, and other ceremonies, under the Jewish law. In this argument it is assumed, that the sacrifices and offerings under the Jewish law proceeded upon the notion of satisfaction for sin, by vicarious punishment ; which cannot, I think, be proved. Victims were slain upon the altar of the Lord, not only as sin-offerings, but as peace-offerings and as burnt-offerings.

Now, peace-offerings were intended to express the thanks of the offerer for the mercies of Providence, and were the acts of grateful homage ; and therefore there could be no idea of punishment included in the sacrifice of a victim in such instances. Burnt-offerings, also, had no reference to sin, but were offered to God as to the Creator, Lord, and Preserver of all, who is worthy of all worship and honor. From this it is most evident, that under the Jewish law, the death of a victim in sacrifice does not of itself express the idea of punishment for sin. Sacrifices and offerings to God taken from the fruits of the earth, or from the animals which lived upon its surface, seem to have formed the earliest kind of worship which mankind paid to their Creator. They were not, then, capable of a more refined kind of *worship*, and the idea of offering gifts to God was suit-

able to their rude notions of gratitude and piety. This became a part of the religion of the Jews, not from any intrinsic worth or propriety that there was in such a mode of worship, but because it suited best the untutored mind of men under this temporary and imperfect institution. The holy men who lived and wrote under the Jewish dispensation, are at great pains to confute the supposition that there was any intrinsic worth in such offerings, and, indeed, studiously enlarge upon the inefficacy and unimportance of the rite of sacrifice. To show this, I need only produce one or two passages from the Old Testament. "Thou desirest not sacrifice," said David (li. Psalm. 16, 17) "else would I give it, thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart thou wilt not refuse." "To what purpose," saith Jehovah by his prophet (Isaiah i. 2) "are a multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fruits of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." And also that splendid passage in the book of Micah, (vi. 6, 8) "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High? — Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? He hath shown thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Thus the writers of the Jewish church absolutely disown the notion of being able in any way to present God with an equivalent or compensation to induce him to pardon; and it is plain they had no idea that their sacrifices under the law were a type or symbol of any

equivalent or satisfaction which should subsequently be given for the sins of men. For if they had viewed their sacrifices in this important light, they certainly could not have spoken of them as, under any view, trifling or insignificant.

There certainly is a great number of passages in the New Testament, in which the death of Christ is compared to that of a victim in sacrifice ; and he is also, in several places, said to have redeemed us with his blood, to have borne our sins, to have given himself without spot to God, that he might purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Expressions of this kind, brought together from different parts of the New Testament, present an appearance of confirming very strongly the doctrine of the real sacrifice of Christ ; and when they are adduced, are usually appealed to with great confidence, as admitting of no other meaning, without the adoption of a violent and unnatural method of interpretation. But there is an obvious reason for suspecting that no such interpretation of these passages can appear *natural*, since they evidently refer to rites and customs with which we are by no means familiar ; and being originally written by persons brought up in the Jewish religion, for the use of those who were perfectly acquainted with its forms and ceremonies, might very naturally be employed to express ideas which will be almost certain to appear to us fanciful and *unnatural*. We are not to expect that we should be able to understand scripture, without taking such circumstances into consideration. Happily, indeed, the New Testament was written by plain men, whose humble rank and want of learning, preserved them from the obscurity which arises from the affectation of science, and qualified

them for writing works which were intended for the use of all mankind. But that they should be perfectly free from modes of expression peculiar to their own country and religion, and derived from the circumstances of their own times, was not to be expected, and if practicable, would probably have been productive of no real benefit ; since it would have deprived their works of those features, which furnish a powerful argument for their genuineness.

We should soon find ourselves involved in the most palpable errors, if we always adopted that which appeared the most obvious and natural interpretation of every passage. The most natural interpretation of the words of Christ respecting the Lord's Supper, " This is my body," is that which the Roman Catholics give to them ; but we are not for that reason bound to subscribe to the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. We must make use of common sense, and consider the general purport and strain of Scripture, or we shall make both heresy and nonsense of various parts of it. It is an obvious rule in perusing any work, to interpret that which is obscure, consistently with that which is plain ; and where language is used which is evidently figurative, which is borrowed from some other subject, and is applied by way of illustration or ornament, to allow a greater latitude of interpretation, than when the terms are simple, and strictly appropriate to the subject in hand.

The general question, then, to be determined, with respect to passages of this nature occurring so frequently in the New Testament, is this ; Can a method be discovered of accounting for the application to Christ of such expressions as are borrowed from the ceremo-

nies of the Jewish law, without supposing that any exact and close correspondence was originally intended ; and such a method as shall leave unimpeached the credit and authority of the Christian Scriptures as the divinely appointed rule and standard of our faith ? We think that such a method may be discovered, and ought to be applied, unless we be resolved to charge upon scripture the obscurity and uncertainty which are the result of our previous prejudices.

Suppose the case of men born Jews, and brought up in the pious profession of the Jewish religion, attending with devout assiduity upon the temple worship, and "in all the ordinances of the law blameless." Suppose them to have arrived at a mature age, with their religious habits, sentiments and expressions, modelled after the form of a ritual and ceremonial dispensation ; and at that period let them be introduced to the knowledge of a more spiritual, purer system of religious faith and practice, and let them become inspired apostles and writers under this new dispensation ; let them have occasion to write epistles to separate communities of believers, composed in a considerable degree of men brought up, like themselves, in an attachment to the ancient institutions of Moses. What will naturally be the style of their religious writings ? Certainly it will be Jewish ; and where religious expressions already in frequent and devout use appear applicable to new topics, they will be used in preference to others, of which no definitions are at hand, or which must be made on purpose. This would naturally be their style of writing. And there would be a great advantage in its being so. For the more familiar the language, the better it is understood ; and an abstract method of expressing religi-

ous truths would be an uninteresting jargon, quite foreign to all practical use or benefit.

Again, let us consider what impressions might naturally be felt by those writers, and by those to whom they wrote ? Something of this sort ; — that, though the understanding fully admitted the superior excellence of the Christian system, yet there was a void in their feelings, a loss of some of the pleasures and tastes of a religious kind to which they had been accustomed, and a frequent tendency towards apathy and indifference on the subject of religion. As this exposed converts to the temptation of going back to Judaism, and was a stumbling block for those who remained in unbelief, it was highly important to provide against it. And it was natural to take the method of providing against it, which is employed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Christian Hebrews had been reproached by their unbelieving brethren with the want of an altar, a priest, a sacrifice. In answer to this, the writer shows that there was a sense in which they wanted none of these.

Let us now suppose, farther, that the author and principal person in this new spiritual kingdom, after leading a blameless and holy life, in continual obedience to God, and pursuit of the best interests of man, was persecuted on account of his goodness, and the sublime objects he had in view, and indeed voluntarily submitted himself to the effects of their rage, and suffered death upon the cross ; after which, being raised far above principalities and powers, and being no longer subject to their control, he had power given him from on high to send forth his apostles upon the ministry of reconciliation unto all nations ; delivering from the power of death, by the evidence of his resurrection,

and from the power of sin, by the proclamation of forgiveness for sins past, and a future righteous judgment. Can it be said to be unnatural or absurd for persons trained up in the ancient religion, to describe so wonderful, so glorious a series of events, by all the images that had formerly been devoted to express their most sacred, exalted, and delightful conceptions? Can we wonder, that Christ should be termed a sacrifice, a priest, an altar, a mercy-seat; that he should be compared to the priest entering into the holy of holies; and that his ascending to heaven should be described as an entering within the veil, offering up himself as a sacrifice once for all, now to appear in the presence of God for us; putting away sin by his sacrifice of himself?

Thus we see that, both by habit and design, it was natural for the apostles of Jesus Christ to express themselves, on this animating and delightful subject, with a considerable latitude of language. Nor can we see any objection to their being allowed to follow the natural bent of their feelings in this respect. It conciliated, without misleading, the Jews, who were accustomed to such allusions; and it would neither mislead nor revolt those of the present day, if they duly reflected upon the necessary influence of previous circumstances on the minds of the apostles.

Having proposed this general key for the interpretation of the passages in which the death of Christ is compared to the sacrifices under the law, it is proper that I should now examine some of them more particularly; that it may appear how far it is capable of application. I shall confine myself to a very few instances.

Romans, iii. 24, 25. "Being justified freely," says the apostle, "by his (that is God's) grace through the

redemption that is in Christ Jesus ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, (or rather, as all modern commentators agree to translate it, a propitiatory, that is, a mercy-seat) through faith in his blood ; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forgiveness of God." The apostle here represents Christ as a mercy-seat, consecrated by his own blood, on which the goodness of God, as it were, takes its stand, and declares his gracious purposes and dispositions towards mankind. What was the mercy-seat amongst the Jews ? Here it was that God made the glorious declaration of pardon and favor to penitent sinners. "There," says the Lord, "I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat." (Exod. xxv. 22.) With what propriety and force might this title be applied to Christ ! He, indeed, became the seat of mercy. By his means did the Lord God commune again with his people. He was the medium of the mercy of God, in proclaiming to the world a clearer revelation of his will.

Christ is also said to have been "made a curse for us." Here it may be fairly asked, whether by his being made a curse is meant, in the eye of the Jews, or in the eye of God his Father ? It is allowed that the Jews denounced him an accursed person. But if by *accursed* we mean living under the displeasure of God, this was so far from being the case with respect to Christ in his death, that in this very circumstance he was the object of the divine complacency in the highest degree ; as he himself says, "for this reason does my Father *love* me, because I lay down my life ;" and it is a general observation in the scriptures, that "precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints." But the verse speaks

for itself, if the whole be read, and the apostle appears anxious to explain what he means. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ; for it is written, accursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now Christ was hanged on a tree, and therefore, in this legal sense of the word, he was accursed.

After stating these instances, let us repeat, it must be clear that these expressions are not all to be taken literally ; for if they are, they absolutely contradict each other. For instance, a *curse* and an *acceptable sacrifice*, are totally inconsistent. For to render a sacrifice acceptable, it was requisite that it should be pure : "Thou shalt not sacrifice unto 'the Lord thy God any thing wherein is blemish, or that is an abomination unto the Lord thy God." Either, therefore, Jesus was not a curse, or he was not a sacrifice, in the sense of the believers in the commonly received doctrine of the atonement. Again, Christ was a priest, a victim, and a mercy seat : how are these things to be reconciled if all are to be taken literally ?

In 1 Cor. v. 7, Christ is compared to the Passover or Paschal-lamb — "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." Here it is plain that Christ is described under the figure of the Paschal-lamb, just as the Christians are exhorted to be pure under the figure of unleavened bread. But consider also the nature of the sacrifice to which Christ is here compared. Was the Paschal-lamb a sin-offering ? Certainly not. The death of the first-born of Egypt was the punishment of a crime in which the Israelites were so far from participating, that they were, in the nature of things, incapable of being guilty of it ; and the feast of the Passover was meant

as a joyful token of their deliverance from the bondage of the Egyptians ; and was therefore the farthest possible from a satisfaction by vicarious punishment.

In the 10th chapter of Hebrews, 12th verse, the writer, speaking of Jesus Christ, says, " this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." In this and a number of other passages, Jesus Christ is compared to a sin-offering under the Jewish law. Nor do we deny that Jesus Christ might most properly be considered as a sacrifice for sin, because his death and resurrection were necessary to the confirmation of that gospel by which sinners are brought to repentance, and the hope of eternal life ; and therefore reconciled to God. It will be said, that this is not a *literal* and *real* sacrifice. But can it be proved that the writers of the New Testament intended to represent Christ as a sacrifice in the most *literal* sense ? That they did not seems capable of an easy proof, from the following consideration. They have applied the same language to a variety of other subjects ; which they certainly would not have done, if they had conceived that Christ was a real sacrifice, and his death the great original of this religious rite. Thus St Paul exhorts Christians to " present their bodies a living sacrifice." St Peter describes them as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, " to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." We are exhorted in the epistle to the Hebrews, " to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually." To do good and to communicate, forget not, " for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." " If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice in you all." And in Romans xv. he speaks of himself as the minister

of Jesus Christ to the guilty, ministering the gospel of God, "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Thus we see that the writers of the New Testament were in the habit of applying this language to a great variety of subjects ; which makes it less probable that when they applied it to the death of Jesus Christ they meant that we should understand them literally.

Besides, though it is under this image of a sacrifice that they frequently speak of the death of Christ, it is by no means the only representation which they give of it. He is described as a good shepherd laying down his life for his sheep. He speaks of himself as a grain of corn, which, unless it fall into the ground and die, abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He is spoken of as a captain leading his followers to salvation. By a variety of figures, he is described as a priest, an altar, a mercy-seat, a high-priest entering within the veil, a sacrifice. Here it appears, that whatever comparisons are made between the death of Christ and the sacrifices, and other ceremonies of the law, they are all capable of being explained in the same way, as expressions having great beauty and propriety when considered as figurative, but destitute of both, if we attempt to explain them by a literal mode of interpretation.

Those passages which represent Jesus Christ as having *ransomed* and *redeemed* us, are to be explained in a similar manner, by reference to the general style of sacred Scripture. It is common in Scripture to describe the world as in a state of bondage and captivity, held under the strict dominion and oppression of enemies. Now, it was a custom with most nations to hold

their captives in a state of abject slavery, unless a sum was paid for their restoration to freedom. Mankind were slaves to the grossest superstitions ; the slaves of sin, under the bondage of sin. From this slavery when they became Christians they were delivered, they were ransomed. When they are described as bought or purchased, this is an expression used in many cases, where, in a literal sense, no price was paid for the deliverance. Thus Exodus xv. 16, "Fear and dread shall fall upon them, till thy people pass over, O Lord, till thy people pass over which thou hast purchased." Deut. xxxii. 16, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise ? Is he not thy father that hath bought thee ? Hath he not made thee and established thee ?" God buys a people when he interposes in their favor. And thus Christ purchased us by his death, not from God, but from sin and the power of death ; for he delivered us from the evil course of this world, and gave us motives for holiness and obedience, arising from faith in God to forgive sin unto eternal life. So, with respect to the word *redeemed*, we are described as redeemed from all iniquity ; and we are exhorted to redeem time, in which no literal notion of purchase can be admitted.

To produce all the passages which relate to this subject, and to afford distinct explanations of them, would greatly exceed the limits of this Tract. What has been said already, may perhaps be sufficient to enable us to understand the principles on which they may be explained consistently with the general sense of Scripture ; and so as not to contradict our established belief in the wisdom, goodness and mercifulness of God. And shall we despise the riches and long suffering of God, as displayed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because the

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means which he has adopted do not exactly accord with our expectations? Shall we find fault with them as not sufficiently splendid and dignified? The simplicity of the means employed is surely one of the greatest proofs of the divine origin of the Christian institution. When we consider what important things are revealed to us, what more can we desire? We are told of the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting; of the providence of God ever exercised over us and in our behalf; the ascension and immortality of Christ, the perpetual love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Why should we wish for knowledge on more important subjects? What is there incomplete for direction and instruction in righteousness? What is there that could have a more happy tendency to inspire us with the most fervent love and veneration of God, and to fill us with sentiments of the most sincere gratitude towards Jesus Christ? We look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, having overcome death, is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that believe in him. He that was dead is alive, he is present to intercede for the welfare of his church, and he will come again to receive his faithful followers to himself. May we earnestly strive to prepare ourselves for his glorious appearance, that we may not be ashamed before him, at his coming, but may be received unto glory, and honor, and praise, through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL

ON

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS.

WE are to consider what claims the gospel makes to our exertions for the benefit of our fellow-creatures. And when we speak of the gospel, we understand it to consist both of doctrines to be believed and duties to be done. A distinguishing feature of the Christian religion is to be found in the extension of its benevolent regards from the few to the many. Heathen philosophers may have limited their influence to the academy or the porch, but Christ broke down all barriers ; he spoke to the people ; he went about doing good and preaching the word ; he appealed to the fact of the poor having the gospel preached to them, as a satisfactory proof of his being sent of God. There never was a system which was so general in its regards, which bore so invasive a character, as Christianity in its earliest days. What is the commission which Christ gave to the twelve, to the seventy, to his disciples at large prior to his ascension, but a commission to go

and preach the gospel to their neighborhoods, to every creature? And how was this command obeyed? What city or shore was there which the feet of the apostles did not tread, to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ? Unlike their degenerate successors, they did not wait till men inquired; they did not station themselves in one spot, and leave all beyond their little circle in ignorance and sin; they did not lie inertly down, and look for the workings of Providence, and the gradual diffusion of their cherished principles. No; they went forth into near and distant lands, disregarding perils, persecution, and death, to bear their testimony to the truth of the gospel, and to overthrow the strong holds of heathen abominations. They were missionaries. Like Jesus, they breathed the missionary spirit and did the missionary's work. Every preacher was a missionary, going about doing good, sent, and glorying in his office, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. We are sure, therefore, that the spirit of missions is the spirit of Christ and of Christianity. We are sure that, till the kingdom of heaven is come in every heart, it is the duty of every Christian to be a missionary, to go and carry the gospel to his neighbor, to go as far as circumstances permit preaching peace by Jesus Christ. That Christian is, to say the least, deficient in an essential element of the Christian character, who is not a missionary; and pre-eminently that minister serves badly his Master's cause who is hostile to the cause of missions. We are not now speaking of exertions in foreign lands. Home missions are abundantly wanted in every part of our country — men who, feeling the value of truth and the power of godliness, should be

instant in season and out of season, instructing the young, warning the prodigal, visiting the orphan and the widow, stimulating inquiry, awakening attention to the claims of truth, going to the homes of the poor and with tenderheartedness and sincerity telling them of the great salvation, and inviting them to accept the gracious offers of their Father.

Another leading feature of Christianity is seen in the earnest concern which it manifests for the immortal welfare of man. This concern is manifest in every page of the New Testament. How strongly, how fervently, did it burn in the soul of Jesus ! Thus on one occasion he expressed his emotions : ‘ O that thou hadst known, even now, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace ! But now they are hid from thy eyes.’ The great object, in fact, of his mission was to seek and to save that which was lost ; the great inducement which led him to all his privations and sufferings, was the tender interest which he felt for the welfare of man. For us he lived, for us he suffered, for us he died. He became the Saviour of the world, because he pitied its lost condition. He died that we might live, because he knew that it profiteth a man nothing though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. Should we not strive to feel as he felt — to have the same concern, the same pity, the same estimate of the worth of the soul, as he had, and to make at least some efforts to save it from sin and suffering ? Let us put a case fairly before us of a human being left to the misery of a wicked heart, rising up to corrupt a whole family — his own offspring. Let us think how all the emotions of the inmates of that

family, which in their natural condition would have been each replete with happiness, are perverted and made the sources of constant trouble and torment ; how that their home, which ought to be the nursery of virtue and the resting-place of affection, is converted into a scene of strife, agitation, and sin ; how husband rises up against wife, and child against parent, and a man's worst foes are those of his own house ; and then, following up the consequences of this pitiable state, reflect on the wrath, tribulation, and anguish, which assuredly await each of these unhappy creatures —viewing the constant succession of sin and suffering through each period of their existence ; and how can we, if there breathes aught of the spirit of Christ in our heart, if mere humanity e'er touched our breast, hesitate a moment that it is our duty to exert a remedial influence, or fail to experience inexpressible delight in rescuing a fellow-creature, a father, a family, from present and from future misery ? No ; he that follows Christ will pity sinners, and labor for their reformation. He will not be content to do justly, but he will love mercy also ; he will not be content to wait for, he will seek, occasions of leading men to God. Freely of the gospel he has received ; freely he will give.

The true Christian has a constant sympathy with the spirit of the gospel. The objects which it pursues are his objects ; his desires, his affections, his aversions, are the same as those of his Lord. He is one with Christ and one with God by a unity of will and of effort. To save sinners is represented in word and in deed as the great work of God, of Christ, and of apostles. The highest and the most holy energies are engaged in the


enterprise — engaged with an earnestness and a tenderness, with an ardor of devotement and a constancy of endeavor, that are truly sublime. What condescension in the Deity, what benignity in his Son, what sacrifices in his messengers, do we there read of ! Religion as beheld in the New Testament is no light thing—‘ it is your life.’ However low may be our estimate of the value of the soul, the whole world is no measure of it in the judgment of our Lord. ‘ For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? ’ Nor less is its value in the sight of the Creator. To form the human soul, to make it a free, active agent, choosing and pursuing good, desirous and capable of everlasting happiness — to form and save the soul, he made the world, the retinue of the heavens, the furniture of the earth, the frame of the body ; he appointed the relations and discipline of life, he sent his well beloved Son, and yielded him up even unto death. All things, says the apostle to his converts — all things are yours ; because all things, the whole furniture and discipline of the school in which man is placed, works together for our good, and contributes to build up the noblest work of God, the soul of man. Must not that, then, be inexpressibly valuable which God himself so estimates as to create the world for its nursery, and the infinitude of objects therein for its instructors ? What, therefore, ought to be our estimate of the soul’s value ? What God hath cleansed, shall we call that common or unclean ? What he hath esteemed, shall we disesteem ? What he created the world and gave his Son to form and bless, shall we neglect ? ‘ Let us not so far lose the spirit of the Gospel. All other things

are as the light dust of the balance in comparison of the human soul. Let us then remember that the true Christian has a constant sympathy with the spirit of the gospel.

Whatever may have been the doctrine of heathen philosophers, whatever may now be the doctrine of the world on this subject, beneficence with the Christian is not optional, but obligatory. To do good is with him a law equally binding as to be good. Christ has in his code changed that which was aforesaid voluntary, into a matter of obligation. He requires each of his followers, in imitation of himself, to advance the interests of his fellow-men, and he represents the awards of the final judgment as taking place according as each man had used or neglected the talent entrusted to him. Among the considerations by which the duty of beneficence is enforced on Christians, that is among the most interesting and constraining which is derived from considering the mercy and grace which each has received of God through Christ. If we have received mercy, we ought to show mercy ; if we are in the way of salvation, we ought to lead others into the same paths. It is the least we can do for mercy and grace unmerited and often despised. In exercising our gifts we shall augment, not waste them. And this is a fact which merits peculiar notice. Our own piety is not extinguished by kindling another's. Like the widow's cruise of oil and barrel of meal, it wastes not, however used. On the contrary, it grows the more, the more it imparts. For so strong are the inducements to beneficence which the Creator has planted in our frame, that the more good we do, the more good and

the more happy we are. And amidst the pleasures of life, there is scarcely one that affords so delightful and lasting a satisfaction as that derived from a consciousness of having benefited a fellow-creature. But when the benefit conferred affects not merely his mortal, but his immortal part ; when in time it will make him comfortable, in eternity happy ; when it will affect him in his heart, in his home, in his public walks and character, in his influence, in his children ; when unborn generations will share the good, and the frame of society be meliorated thereby ; when the full amount of blessing which it has occasioned, the future state only can disclose, and eternity only can measure — then, surely, the consciousness of having saved but one soul is enough to impart joy unspeakable and full of glory. Yes, to work together with God is not a duty merely — it is a privilege, it is a delight — it is a delight which will grow for ever, as the happy effects of such labors of love unfold themselves in this and the future world. Unhappy men that know nothing of this pleasure ; who live and die with their thoughts and affections concentrated all in self ; who have never at the close of a day reflected on its scenes in the pleasing hope that some prejudice might in a fellow-being's mind have been removed, some evil habit shaken, some grief assuaged, some hope confirmed, some joy inspired. And occasionally to enjoy the happy frame of mind which such thoughts occasion, is an overpayment of happiness for exertions made, and obstructions conquered, and exertions, alas ! they too often are, unproductive.

There is still another feature of the gospel to which we shall allude. The gospel professes to be 'the



truth,' to be emphatically that system which is best calculated to bring about the great moral purposes of the Creator. Jesus himself is 'the life,' because he is 'the way' and 'the truth.' No warrant can be found in the New Testament for treating with indifference the progress of the whole or any part of the gospel. The religion of Jesus is there held forth as a treasure of inestimable value ; yes, and, in a certain sense, of indispensable necessity to the salvation of men. It is not pretended that it teaches that those who believe not the gospel will eternally perish. But it does set forth, and reason warrants the declaration, that without it the soul may be lost — lost to goodness, lost to happiness ; though not, we would hope, lost beyond the reach of God's mercy, yet lost in this and in the future state. And in unison with this, it is abundantly evident that on the reception of the gospel depends the perfection of human character. To be greatly good or greatly happy without it, seems impossible. No other system approaches to it in fitness to call out the powers of the human breast, and raise man to the height of excellence which he has the capacity of attaining. While in proportion as its hold on the heart becomes weak, so does the character fall and the happiness decrease. Now, its power over the soul may be weakened by corruptions attaching to itself, as well as by wickedness in man. Hence arises the necessity of bringing the gospel to bear upon the soul in the same state of purity as that in which it was revealed by Jesus, and promulgated by apostles. Except this be the case, it is not 'the truth,' it is not the gospel, but human devices, that seek the dominion of the heart.

But it may be asked, How am I to know that the gospel, as I hold it, is the gospel as revealed by Jesus ? You believe that the principles you hold are the principles of Christianity, or you would not entertain them. They are the result of your inquiries ; they command the assent of your mind. Here, then, is your warrant to diffuse them. And more, in your belief is involved an obligation. A constraint is laid upon you to teach others what has been imparted to you. 'Woe is me,' said the Apostle, 'if I preach not the gospel.' And even though you may not possess 'the truth' in the sentiments which you have adopted, yet the communication of it, leading to comparison with other principles, and to collision with other minds, may conduce to the discovery and extension of right apprehensions ; whereas if every one had pleaded the difficulty you plead, there never could have been any discussion, and consequently truth would have remained unknown. And thus the human race, from the fear that they possessed not the truth, would for ever have deprived themselves of its blessings. On the contrary, the fearless yet candid advocacy of private opinions, has led to the furtherance of knowledge and the promotion of happiness ; and perseverance in the fearless yet candid advocacy of *our* private opinions, is the only method by which 'the truth' can obtain its predicted prevalence, and the evils with which the world, in its present condition, is marred, can be effectually removed. It seems, then, that the voice of the gospel calls upon us to labor both for the furtherance of truth, and for the furtherance of righteousness. The two ought never to be disjoined ; they are united in the gospel ; they ought to be united

in our apprehensions, in our language, in our affections, in our endeavors. The distinction of speculative and practical principles may exist in common phraseology—it exists not in the Testament; may serve to point a tirade against popular exertions, but cannot advance the real interests of man. The truth only can make man free; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and he can know or feel but little of his creed who does not value his principles as a Unitarian Christian above all price. What is the meaning of that disparagement of Unitarianism which one sometimes meets with even from men that ought to know and speak better? Unitarianism is to them ‘the truth;’ do they undervalue that? It is the religion of Jesus; ought that to be lightly thought and lightly spoken of? But they would reply, ‘We value most highly his precepts and his example; we do not like controversy.’ And why not his doctrines too? Is Christ divided? Does the New Testament permit you to take what you please, and to leave what you please? We repeat, Christ is ‘the life,’ because he is the truth; and without the truth you cannot be, no man can be, thoroughly ‘free.’

But of all errors, that appears to us among the greatest which represents Unitarianism as a system of speculations. It is no such thing. There is no tenet in it which is not intimately connected with practice, otherwise it could not be the gospel; and for ourselves we venerate it chiefly because of its immediate bearing on the heart and life. The unity of God is essential to his paternity, and the paternity of the Creator is the creature’s best solace and support, while it tends more

than any other sentiment to unite men together in the bonds of a common brotherhood. But we must not cite instances to prove the assertion that the doctrines of Unitarianism are intimately blended with piety and benevolence. Those who have realized the former, will show forth the latter, and know of a truth that it is a doctrine according to godliness. And we will add, that a full perception of the blessings conferred by Unitarian sentiments will prompt the desire to spread their influence. This full perception can, perhaps, be hardly felt except by those who have been redeemed from the galling thralldom of some of the denominations which prevail around us. But let a man have fully felt what Calvinism teaches to be true, and he will then know what is meant by 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' Sweet as the light and warmth of day to the long-incarcerated prisoner, sweet as health and vigor to him who has suffered days and months of sickness and vanity, sweet as peace and joy to the disconsolate and anxious breast, is the change from the gloomy and terrifying doctrines of genuine Calvinism, to the mild and affectionate and cheering accents of the Son of God. And even without this painful experience, some conception may be formed of the comparative value of truth and error, by attention to the doctrines of the day, as set forth in the pulpits of our orthodox brethren, and more especially of those who are truly Calvinistic. We are supplied with, though at present we have not room for, illustrations of this assertion. But we have often thought, when engaged either in hearing or reading the representations that prevail of the character of God and the destiny of man, that if

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our Unitarian brethren who set their face against popular exertions were but to hear and read such things for themselves, their benevolence would prove too strong for their caution, and impel them to encourage and originate the means of enlightening the mind and consoling the heart of their fellow-christians. And, again, we have thought that the wonder is not that there are so many, but that there are so few unbelievers; for we frankly say, we see not how a man of common intelligence can believe what is delivered from many pulpits. And thousands might, we doubt not, have been rescued from the gloomy and uncomfortable regions of scepticism, had the unadulterated gospel of Christ been laid before them; and it is still in the power of Unitarians to save others from the same melancholy fate, if they will prove true to their obligations.

What stronger obligations can any one lie under than those we have now set forth? In addition to all the powerful claims of the gospel, we are called to feel the claims which lie upon reformers, and upon those who may, and who only effectually can, vindicate the truth of Jesus, and arrest the march of infidelity. We are not without examples, bright and noble examples, and prompters in our own communion. There have been men bearing our name who counted all things but dung and dross, that they might win and honor Christ. Have we not read of what a Biddle, an Emlyn, a Priestly, and a Lindsey, to say nothing of those who have emulated their example in America, did and suffered for the cause of truth? Faithful were they in their day, doing the duties thereof. To them it belonged to bring

forth the pearl of great price from beneath the rubbish by which it was hidden. Did they shrink from their duty? Was it easy of performance? What they discovered, we, in the order of Providence, are called upon to hold up to the world. Shall we prove unworthy successors of these excellent of the earth? They were required to be in the study, we in the pulpit; they in private, we in public; they to search, we to promulgate. Here is our duty; and except we perform it, every word of eulogy we give to their memories is a word bringing disgrace upon ourselves. There were giants in the earth in those days. But if we have not equal strength with them, we have an easier task. We have only to apply what they discovered. Theirs was the work of the intellect, ours of the heart. Pre-eminent talents were essential to them, we want chiefly a benevolent disposition. Let us not then with a lighter—yes, and a pleasanter task, and in happier times, fail to carry forward the work they commenced.

But it will be said the work is going on. A gradual change is taking place in the creeds of other Christians. Granted; but this consideration affects not one jot our duties. We ought, therefore, to thank God and take courage. To spread a purer belief is not the only work we have to do. We have also to spread the spirit and power of the gospel; we have to root out sin, and to plant instead piety and goodness. And until the agents that are employed are adequate to effect all of this nature that is required, not one who is called by the name of Christ is at liberty to refuse to labor in his Master's vineyard. Alas! after all the exertions that have been made, there is but too

urge a mass of iniquity entirely beyond the reach of all Christian influences. Crime increases with the increase of the population, and in every district of the country there are but too many who claim the sympathy and aid of every Christian.

But however much the opinions of our fellow-christians may be undergoing modification, we cannot, we confess, see how this is a reason for lukewarmness on our parts. If they have approached somewhat to the word of God, this would seem rather the offer of Providence to work together with us, an invitation to avail ourselves of a favorable opportunity. Or are we to conclude that because the spirit of the day, and the progression of events, are in our favor, that, therefore, we are exonerated from all exertion? On no other subject should we reason in this manner. It was 'in the fullness of time' that the Almighty made Christianity known. A favorable state of the world should not arrest, but prompt, efforts for the welfare of man. Besides, what is the cause of this modification? Before the day of Socinus and that of Priestly, centuries had passed away, and creeds went on continually growing more absurd and lengthy. But when they had kindled the light, it gradually spread its beams through the church, to some in less, to some in greater number. Without their labors, then, the work could not have been begun; how can it be terminated without ours? The notion we are combating goes to destroy the very means by which the change recorded has taken place. And well may we be assured, that except we hold up the light that has been kindled, transmitting the torch from hand to hand, and from age to age, augmenting

the volume of its light and the sphere of its influence, darkness will soon regain its former empire — each succeeding generation becoming more ignorant than the former.

But the respondent may answer, 'Truth is mighty and must prevail.' True; but not without human agency. 'Providence will take care of its interests.' Yes; but in its usual manner — by human co-operation. Strange as it may seem, we really fear that these notions prevail to a great extent. Yet even a Heathen fabulist saw and exposed their absurdity, teaching all such reasoners, that if any good is to be effected for the human race, human beings must put their shoulder to the wheel. Where would have been the Reformation if Wickliffe and Luther had contented themselves with relying on Providence? And in what condition would be the temporal concerns of our friends, the respondents, if they folded their arms and wrapped about them their cloaks and called on Providence? There is a good old saying most pertinent to the present topic, 'Providence helps those who help themselves.'

And now we must be permitted to turn the favorable aspect which is pleaded against, into an argument in favor of, increased exertion among the Unitarian body. That a change for the better has taken place we believe. The actual sentiments of our fellow-christians, though not their professed creeds, are less irrational than they were wont to be. The spirit of the times is in our favor. Men now dare to think, and in some instances to utter their sentiments. Inquiry is proceeding on every side. Reformation is gradually spreading around us. Let but the present activity of mind have its

full development, and the present systems of theology cannot endure. Creeds and confessions will crumble away before it. Who shall show a better way—who shall exhibit a purer faith—who shall set forth Jesus in his unsullied excellence? It is the duty, it ought to be considered the dearest privilege, of Unitarian Christians. And except they rally round the ark of God, it will, it is our belief, be carried away captive; the land will be visited with a season of darkness and coldness in the form of unbelief. Rather let us avail ourselves of this seasonable juncture. The fields are white to harvest, but the laborers are few. All things are ready; let us enter in and possess the land.

‘But,’ rejoin the cautious and the timid, ‘is there not a fear of the body becoming zealous overmuch?’ We humbly think not—that no fear can by any possibility be more unfounded. A review of the last thirty years will show that burning zeal is no essential element in our communion, and if we have been right in the views we have taken of the actual predominance of the intellect over the heart among Unitarian Christians at the present moment; if impediments and chills exist in anything like the degree which we have been led to suspect they do, the most zealous among us need not fear of his zeal overstepping the limits of moderation. We perhaps look upon zeal with rather different eyes than some others. When founded on principle, and constant in its action, and regulated by charity, it bears to us an aspect truly sublime, and the Saviour we love mainly for the righteous and fervent zeal he showed in his holy and beneficent undertaking. Of one thing, however, we may all rest assured, that

without zeal no cause can spread. Such is the uniform testimony of history. All the great moral changes which society has undergone have been effected by the ardor of zeal. What, indeed, is zeal but another word for enthusiasm? and to enthusiasm the world is more indebted than to any other principle of the human soul. The intellect may discover truth, but enthusiasm only can give it prevalence. This is peculiarly true of moral and religious truth. The Apostles succeeded in their benevolent efforts, and the Reformers in theirs, because they were enthusiastic in the cause to which they had devoted themselves. Nor do we think it possible for an impression to be made on the multitude, on a mass so dense and impervious to whatever wears the dress of novelty, without the aid of those lofty, commanding, and irresistible emotions, which are implied in enthusiasm. The rays of the sun, the drops of the rain, fall too gently to arrest their attention; the lightning and the thunderbolt are needful to arouse and penetrate them. And we are persuaded that if, instead of desultory efforts, we arose, as a body, to an attitude of defence and onset against sin and error, penetrated with the deep, earnest, yet tender spirit of the gospel; arose, not in scattered platoons, maintaining here and there a random and therefore ineffectual fire, but individually and collectively, we could not fail to command attention, to awaken admiration, to reform the heart, and to rectify the creed.

We again, therefore, utter the voice of invitation—Whosoever will, let him come. Hundreds there are, we believe, ready to respond to the call—hundreds who need only the encouragement which they ought to

receive. We call on those who have it in their power, to give the requisite countenance. We appreciate highly what ministers and laymen have already done. We are not made to disparage or forget (knowingly) any righteous effort for a cause which is in our minds identified with the cause of truth and the best interests of man. Yet it is but a few, comparatively, that have lent efficient aid, and they will be the first to acknowledge that their exertions have too often been disproportionate to their means and the goodness of the cause. Others we beseech by the love of Christ, and the mercies they have received, and by a regard to the welfare of their neighborhoods, and the happiness of immortal souls ; we beseech them to aid, counsel and direct, to stimulate and sustain, all those who manifest their love of God by their love for man, and their love for man by their love of the gospel, and their love of the gospel by well-sustained efforts for the increase of its prevalence. We beseech such to compare what they have done with what they might do, and from themselves to turn to our body at large, contrasting its actual efficiency with the efficiency of which it is capable.

It is with peculiar interest and concern that we advert to the younger part of our ministers, and to those who are preparing for the sacred duties of Christian pastors. They are the hope of the church. Their habits are not yet fixed ; the progress of time has not cooled down the warmth of their hearts ; the influence of a former age lies as yet lightly upon them ; in a word, they bring new minds and young affections into the church. Would to God that they may be enabled to devote all their energies to the great and honorable

work of leading men to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ! May none of them be turned aside by the unconquerable force of circumstances to seek a livelihood and employment for their abilities in pursuits which, however honorable in themselves, have no immediate bearing on the duties of the ministry. We would have them to remember that the state of our churches, and the state of society, is such as to require, not geologists, not antiquarians, not mathematicians, not schoolmasters ; but preachers and pastors, eloquent men and mighty in the Scriptures, men pervaded by one desire, that of reconciling man to God, and advancing the kingdom of Christ.

Turning from those who, by their station, are expected to be more influential than others, we call upon all individually who bear the name of Unitarian Christian. The work is yours ; the duty is yours. You recognize no peculiar rights of the clergy. You do well ; but, in consistency, lay not upon them any peculiar duties. You are each a minister of Christ. Every good man is or ought to be so. It is an honor to labor in your Master's vineyard. There is not one of you, however poor, but can labor, and with most desirable effect. Canst thou not, poor as thou art, adorn the doctrine thou hast professed, and, by the irresistible attraction of a holy conversation, put calumny to shame, and draw the teachable to the house of prayer ? Canst thou not, by a punctual and regular attendance on the ordinances of public worship, encourage thy minister, increase the attendance, and thus cause the temple to wear a more winning and respectable aspect ? Canst thou not in private visit the orphan and the widow

in their afflictions, cheer the disconsolate, discountenance vice, and plead with the sinner? Canst thou not inform the ignorant and instruct the young; or if, perchance, like Moses, thou art 'slow of speech,' canst thou not find many an eloquent spokesman who will ably plead the cause thou cherishest, though they speak not with the living tongue, but from the living page? Each one of you has a sphere of influence—we ask you to let the sounds of the gospel be heard therein. Each one has a talent—we ask of you to occupy it.

We call, then, upon the individuals of which our communion consists, to lend each his aid. Without the co-operation of the people at large little good can be done. In speaking of eminent men we often deceive ourselves; much as is due to them, we are wont to rate their individual influence too highly. We talk of the dominion of a single mind; but such a thing, in strictness of speech, is not to be found. Single and unaided, no man ever established an empire over his fellow-creatures. In reality, we forget the subordinate agents amidst our admiration of the chief—the inferiors that surround him are lost from sight in the blaze of his real or imagined glory. Yet, though forgotten, they are essential to success. Without fellow-laborers, the skill and foresight of an architect, however pre-eminent they might be, would lead to no valuable result. In the same way, the wisest master builder that ever labored for the edification of the church of Christ, may, unless encouraged and aided by the operation of fellow-workers, spend his strength for nought, and labor in vain in the Lord. It was not by the surpassing and Herculean strength of an individual hand that those

stupendous edifices were raised which still strike the traveller with wonder and admiration as he follows the waters of the Nile, or ruminates amidst the ruins of Palmyra, or reflects on the ravages of time when surrounded by the splendid desolation of ancient Greece. No, the work was effected by ordinary mortals. One superior mind presided indeed, but all his great conceptions were carried into effect by the united efforts of men like unto ourselves. Far in the depths of the ocean there arise mountain-rocks which, from the bottom of an almost immeasurable sea, stretch upward to the surface of the waters. These are stupendous beds of coral, the work of tiny beings, which, age after age, attach themselves to the growing mass, and then perishing, accumulate, by insensible degrees, these mountains of the sea ; which at once bid proud defiance to the fury of the tempest, and present everlasting monuments of the efficacy of united operations. In the same manner, that building up in the heart of a holy temple to God, and in the world a pure and holy church, which is the great object of true religion, is to be effected, not by one but by many hands ; and as the building up of those stupendous rocks takes place by a series of the smallest depositions, so may every laborer, however little his means, give an efficient aid towards the edification of the church of Christ.

What a general, however eminent in talent and prowess, would prove to be without soldiers, that is a reformer without associates. Cæsar, we are wont to say, won the battle. And Cæsar may have laid the plans and guided the measures, and infused the spirit that mainly contributed to success ; but who bore the

tug of war, the labor and toil of the day ; who supplied the heart and sinews, that quailed not through fear, nor sunk even after the exhaustion of fatigue ? Not Cæsar, but his comrades. And so it is in the moral changes which have taken place. Wickliffe was succeeded by Huss, and Huss by Luther, and Luther fought the fearful battle, attended by a host of gallant companions ; and to the present day the completion of their labors, in so far as it is effectually sought, is sought, not by scattered and insulated efforts, but by the binding together of the friends of human improvement, and the united action of many harmonious and concurring members. Even he who came forth to the great work under the special aid of the Almighty, sought in co-operation, and the co-operation even of fishermen, the means of success ; and his apostles, in their turn, never failed, wherever they established a church, to appoint some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly compacted and connected together by the aid of *every* joint, and according to the *proportionate operation of every single limb*, thriveth to the improvement of itself in love.

Men and brethren, the path of duty is plain before you ; happy for yourselves, happy for the church, happy for the world, if ye walk therein.

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F I R S T R E P O R T

OF

H I S S E R V I C E ,

A S A

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of his scattered flock. I now witnessed, close at hand, the operations of a Mission which I had long admired, at a distance. I became familiar with human nature in many of its most interesting features, — its wants, — its exposures, — its temptations, — and its sin. I was called also to witness and admire instances of faithfulness and virtue, displayed amidst apparently the most adverse circumstances, and such as I had little conception of before. I began the study of Pauperism under an able instructor. And I learned, among the objects of his Ministry, both to value our holy Religion more highly, and to be more devoted to the advancement of its interests. I saw ‘the will of God,’ and ‘the cause of Christ,’ revealed in their infinite worth and truth by the wants they were to meet, the virtues they were to foster, and the sins they were to destroy ; and I became conscious of a wider apprehension and a deeper conviction of the obligations imposed upon me, as a child of God and a follower of Christ. Had my connection with the Ministry to the Poor extended no farther, I never should have ceased to reflect with gratitude upon the experience and knowledge I insensibly gathered in — a rich harvest from the months of that summer.

In August, the Secretary of your Board communicated my appointment to the Office of Assistant Minister at large. Dr Tuckerman and myself met with you to receive your views for the future conduct of this Ministry. Soon after, we divided the city between ourselves. The north-end, and the vicinity of the Chapel were assigned to me. Dr Tuckerman took the remainder. In October, 1832, our hands were strengthened by the offer of Mr F. T. Gray to take part with us. The plan which

REPORT.

To the Executive Committee of the

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

GENTLEMEN, — My connection with the Ministry to the Poor commenced under pleasing auspices in 1832.

While still at Cambridge, early in the spring of that year, I was requested to preach in the vacant pulpit of the Friend Street Chapel. I cheerfully complied ; and finding that the continuation of my services would relieve the gentlemen upon whom the supply of the desk had devolved, and promote at the same time the objects of the Chapel, I freely gave that also. The evening lecture was held each Sabbath, till the usual time of closing the house on account of the hot weather.

Meanwhile, I had called upon Dr Tuckerman, and offered him any assistance, that I could give, in the visiting to which his labors had for some time been confined. It was with great pleasure, on my part, that I was immediately permitted to visit with him among the people of his charge. Almost every forenoon of the remaining spring, and following summer, was passed in his company, as he ministered to the temporal and spiritual wants

1

which the object most richly deserved, and upon which its success was almost wholly dependent. Dr Tuckerman was called from the city during a considerable part of the summer and fall of 1832, to collect the necessary information for the Report of the Commission on the Pauper Laws, upon which he had been placed by the Legislature. On his return, the arrangement of these materials cost him a great deal of time and labor. He resumed his visits among the poor after his Report had been brought before the public. But his exertions had been such as greatly to impair his health and strength. In the spring of this year he was obliged to travel south for his health. On returning to Boston he became seriously ill ; and early in July he left the country, in company with a friend who had kindly and providentially offered him the opportunity of a tour in Europe.

Mr Gray was also obliged to be absent from the duties of our Ministry. In the beginning of the past spring he removed to Brooklyn, Conn., to pursue his studies with the Rev. S. J. May.

I was thus left, a large part of the year, with the numerous calls from all parts of the city, to distract my time and attention from any one point.

In pursuance of the plans we had marked out to ourselves, I gave my particular care, as far as I could, to the south-end, which drew me still more away from the neighborhood of the Friend Street Chapel. In the beginning of the present month, Mr Gray returned to labor with me. The chapel called for our immediate attention. It was soon put in thorough repair, and well painted. An organ was placed in it by one of its friends. Mr Gray commenced his services on the 6th instant, under the

most encouraging prospects. The Rev. Mr Taylor and the Rev. Mr Himes took part with us the first evening ; and a crowded audience was present to encourage our hearts. The numbers which have since attended have fully answered our most sanguine hopes. The services, as they have been arranged for the present, will be a morning service for the children, which it is hoped their parents will also attend ; and a regular service each afternoon and evening.

It gives me pleasure to state that the Howard Sunday School, connected with this chapel, is in a flourishing condition. Its numbers are quite full. The attendance is punctual, and the teachers have every reason to trust that the good work is prospering in their hands. At the south-end I became early acquainted with several children, belonging to no Sunday school. Many of them I was able to gather together both parts of each Lord's day, in the vestry of the Rev. Mr Pierpont's church, which had been kindly opened for the purpose, by the Standing Committee of the Society. The number of my pupils increased very slowly. In attempting to enlarge it, I found that I was interfering with the plans of the friends of several schools, already established in that part of the city, and especially so with those of the Hollis Street Sunday School. The teachers and superintendents noticed the same circumstance, on their part. Mutual advances were accordingly soon made for a union of the two schools. This was effected in November, 1832; and continues to the present date to satisfy the wishes of both parties. The friends of the old school have the satisfaction of seeing large numbers of children drawn to their classes from the families of the

poor. I have found an ample provision, always ready to be made, for whatever children I have met with in want of a Sunday school. I have also received great pleasure, and no slight assistance, from my connection with the large body of teachers in this school. They have sympathized strongly in the great objects of my mission. They have become visiters, with me, of the poor ; and I can recall many cases in which they have rendered me most efficient aid. I have long looked upon our united schools as the centre of action for all my future operations at the south-end. We have had a very large number of pupils the past year. The average attendance for several Sundays in the hottest part of summer, was 150. The attendance is considered as regular one half of the day, and as optional the other. The chapel in my section of the city will be opened as soon as circumstances will permit. The number of families with which I have become connected in my ministry is 348 ; and I have made among them 2550 visits.

I have thus presented you with the outline of my labors. It recalls to my memory many of the happiest hours and happiest scenes of my life. I never shall cease to thank God for the work to which he has called me. Should it please him that I am to be continued in my present occupation, I shall most cheerfully devote to it my time and attention till I leave the world. It is true, that I have met with trial and disappointment in my labors among the poor ; but, as these have been the offspring of sin, they certainly present to all who love their race the highest claims, and the strongest motives, to labor in extending the sway of Christian salvation.

Permit me, in this communication with you, to express

my hearty thanks to the many friends whose sympathy and support have been kindly extended to me in my ministry. I bless God for the gift of such friends—I rejoice in them—and, into whatever hands our mission shall hereafter pass, I am glad in the hope that these supporters of the good cause will ever be found to give, under the Providence of our Heavenly Father, the surest pledge of its success. The end of that great work, in which my associates and I have been made instruments,—the physical and moral improvement of man; his deliverance from suffering and sin; the recovery, advancement, and salvation of the human race—has been ordained by God, and revealed by Christ, in close dependence upon the wide diffusion of the spirit of universal love.

From the outline of my ministry I cannot pass to any more detailed accounts, having private reasons to prevent me; nor can I, at present, enter into the discussion of any of the principles of our work, as my degrees of experience and opinion are yet those of a learner. Let me pass, then, to a part of our plan, which we are just putting into operation, and which we are desirous of making an object of general attention.

Before Dr Tuckerman left the city, we had succeeded in procuring a room in a central part of the city. This room has been opened since Mr Gray's return, under the name of 'The Office of the Visitors of the Poor.' It is in the basement story of the Saving's Bank, Tremont Street. We shall make it our own place of business; and we wish to have it considered as open to all who visit the poor.

Our city, as is well known, presents an instance of

city, presents a subject for the most serious consideration. This is what we should expect from the over crowded population, and amidst the decrepid political establishments of Europe ; but it stands in an unnatural contrast with our unequalled prosperity, and with the general health, vigor, and freshness of our political institutions. . . . The general design of the society is to improve the intellectual, moral, and physical condition of the poor. Its primary and specific objects will be to extend the advantages of education to the children of the indigent — to discourage their employment in hawking, peddling, street-begging, and pilfering ; to establish the necessary schools for the instruction of adults — to abolish indiscriminate alms-giving — to visit the poor at their habitations — to give them counsel — to aid them in obtaining employment — to inspire them with self-respect — to inculcate habits of economy, industry, and temperance, and whenever it shall be absolutely necessary, to provide, through the aid of private individuals, and of the public authorities, relief for their necessities. It is impossible to know where the care of such an association is most wanted, without a personal acquaintance with all who are its appropriate objects. It is intended that this care shall assume the character of paternal guardianship. It is designed to establish a general and friendly intercourse with the poor, which shall secure a thorough knowledge of their actual condition, and enable us to apply the best means for its improvement. It is by such an intercourse only that we can assure them of our sympathy, bring them under its moral influence, and multiply among them the proper means and inducements to depend upon their own exertions for the comforts of life. It is only by the knowl-

edge which will result from such an intercourse, and which will embrace every section of the city, that we can hope to minister relief, when necessary, with sound discrimination, and without which, it would be a curse rather than a blessing.'

'It is a distinguishing feature of this society, that it is intended, not only to reach every family and every individual who may need its aid, but that instead of being limited to a particular description of necessities, it shall embrace the want of knowledge, of instruction, of advice, of employment, and of the necessities of life. In short, it is intended that the poor shall look to the society for their advisers, their protectors, and their benefactors, under all the trials to which they may be exposed.' 'If our labors shall be successful,' add the friends of this society, 'they will probably result in a general reform of our system of providing for the poor,—they can hardly fail in any event to produce an immense melioration of their condition.'

A part of the measures here recommended are already in operation in our own community. But much yet remains to be done. It is hoped that the Office we have opened will afford facilities for effecting the whole of the good work. In our ministry to the poor we have always looked upon it as highly desirable to bring about a more extended connexion of the different classes of society. And we rejoice in the prospect, which we now have, of being better able to accomplish this than we ever were before.

As far as vagrancy, street begging, with its long train of evils, and that practice of imposition which too many have been following for years in our city—are concerned, we are determined to attempt to check

dence of character and exertion have thus been destroyed and the field opened for the growth of poverty and want. We have often been told by those, who have applied to us for aid, that hitherto they had supplied their own necessities through their own industry, but that now they had adopted another course, to which they had been urged by the importunities of some friend, expatiating upon the plans and means of the many charitable associations, and dwelling upon the plea that they had as good a right to such assistance as any who received it. Let such a state of things proceed a little farther, as unchecked as it is at present, and we shall be overwhelmed with the claimants of public and private alms.

The subject has already attracted public attention in England. The American translation 'of the Visitor of the Poor,' from the French of the Baron de Gerando, has been re-published in that country, with a valuable preface bearing the initials of the Rev. J. R. Beard, of Manchester. We quote his words : — 'The recent report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the working of the poor-laws, shows but too clearly, that the administration of the large sums annually collected for the relief of the poor, serves even to extend poverty and foster vice. Our institutions for the dispensations of charity are in some cases productive of similar effects; witness the exemplification, in an individual case, of the operation of various local charities, given in the following passage, taken from the report of the commissioners before alluded to, being part of the evidence of the rector of Christ Church, Spitalfields, and certified by his own *personal observation*.' The passage which follows is too long for insertion. It takes

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RELIGIOUS OPINIONS
AND
EXAMPLE
OF
MILTON, LOCKE,
AND
NEWTON.

BY REV. HENRY ACTON,
OF EXETER, ENGLAND.

PRINTED FOR THE
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RELIGIOUS OPINIONS
OF
MILTON, LOCKE, AND NEWTON.

IN the matters of Christian faith and obedience, we are cautioned by an Apostle, not to *glory in men*. There can be no reasonable apology for our doing so. Have we not much higher sources of spiritual wisdom, in the plainest lessons of scripture, than are to be met with in the profoundest thoughts of the most gifted of uninspired mortals? In the formation of our religious opinions and habits, therefore, we should be careful that our views are not determined, not too much influenced, by the mere authority of great names, whether in the Church or in the World. We are bound to embrace, not that which may chance to have been believed by others, however illustrious for their talents, for their characters or their services, but that which appears to our own understandings to be true in doctrine, or right in practice, according to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, contained in the sacred volume and

interpreted by the light of private judgment. There is no sounder, no more important principle of religious inquiry, than this. The full recognition of it is demanded on the strongest grounds of reason and experience. It involves at once the first privilege and the first obligation of our christian calling. If we neglect it, — if one says, I am of this great Divine, another, I am of that eminent Philosopher, — *are we not carnal* ? It is plain we are strangers to the proper spirit of the gospel, which was meant to free us from this, and every other kind of moral bondage, with a solemn yet generous kind of liberty : it makes religion entirely a concern between our own individual souls and the God whom we serve ; our only Master being Christ, and truth and duty our only objects of veneration:

But when this principle is admitted, as it must be, it does not seem to follow, that we are forbidden to bestow any *serious attention* on the religious opinions and example of great men. Such forbearance would not be possible, even if it were at all to be recommended, — which it is not. Great men are usually endowed with means of *enforcing* attention to whatever they think and do, in matters of such deep and universal interest as those of religion. We all have a desire (is it not a rational desire ?) to become acquainted with the views and feelings entertained, on sacred subjects, by men of great moral worth, or high intellectual distinction ; not, indeed, for our absolute guidance, but for our gratification, instruction and improvement. It is natural to expect they may edify us in many things ; and if, in other things, we find their

sentiments erroneous, or think their example not to be imitated, through that liberty in Christ already mentioned we have the right of rejecting whatever we seriously disapprove.

With these explanations, I enter on the present subject. I am to treat of the religious opinions and example of MILTON, LOCKE, and NEWTON.

Three names more highly and justly renowned, it would not be easy to select from the annals of the republic of letters, or of the whole civilized world. Which should be accounted the greatest, I will not take upon me to affirm. In many respects, the minds, the characters, the performances of these illustrious men, differed widely ; but all were truly great. And when the dissimilarity in persons or objects is so considerable, whilst the excellence of all is so vast, any comparison, with a view to determine the relative superiority of either, becomes a vain and impossible task.

Who shall say, whether the starry heavens, or the smiling earth, or the tranquil ocean, is to be esteemed the *most* beautiful object in nature ? They are all *too* beautiful to admit of any such question ; and the true lover of nature must admire them all. There would be a like and an equal difficulty, in deciding which of these extraordinary men is to be held greater than the others. The rays of their intellectual splendor are of different kinds and hues, like those which Newton first discovered in the beams of the sun ; but like them also, all are bright and beautiful. Their works survive them, and will live for ever. The achieve-

ments of one in sacred song, and of the others in true philosophy, are a part of the unfading glory of this nation. The world has assigned them each a place in that temple of immortal fame, where the memory of great characters is enshrined for the worship of posterity : and all who revere wisely-directed genius, in whatever way its energies may be manifested ; all who love the voice of poetry ; all who bow before the majesty of science ; all who venerate philosophic truth and wisdom, will gladly pay the honors of admiration to all or either of these great names.

To Milton we are indebted for the production, in our own language, of that particular work of genius, which would seem to be an almost necessary monument of a great people's glory and refinement. I mean a complete and imperishable Epic Poem. In imitation of the two famous poets of antiquity, and with a genius not inferior to theirs, Milton seized on a subject which, in its principal outlines, was already familiar to the thoughts and affections of the Christian people for whom he wrote, — the story of man's primeval innocence and miserable fall. How he has treated that story, few or none of my readers can require to be told. He found in it, or rather created out of it, innumerable sources of eloquent thought, concerning all high and gracious things, human and divine. He has adorned it with countless images of purity and happiness, of tenderness and sorrow, of transcendent beauty and solemn grandeur ; images that flow in upon our minds in a perpetual stream of sweet sounds. And in this way, he has prepared

an exhaustless fountain of delight, for all those who desire, from time to time, when wearied with the dull realities of life, to refresh their souls at the springs of poetic inspiration.

In regard to Locke, his fame rests chiefly on his incomparable work, the 'Essay concerning Human Understanding.' In that work, judged according to the circumstances in which he was placed, he undoubtedly displayed wonderful powers of penetration and analysis, and a most noble spirit of patient research. The very manner in which he set about his investigations, affords a bright example to all philosophers. He looked for truth where alone it can certainly be found, not in books and systems, but in nature, and especially in the conscious dictates of his own vast and cultivated mind. By these means, he was enabled to reveal, in a great degree, the mysteries of our intellectual nature; the very constitution, as it were, of our minds; the most subtile operations of that godlike faculty of reason, by which we are distinguished from the brutes. To him we are indebted for laying anew, on a better and broader basis, the foundations of that most useful science, which teaches us, in a highly important sense, 'to know ourselves;' to perceive by what methods the correction and extension of our knowledge is to be most surely pursued. Whatever errors he may be thought chargeable with,—errors brought to light by subsequent discoveries which he mainly contributed to promote,—the composition of his work was undoubtedly one of the great strides, by which the true philosophy of the human mind has advanced to its present forward position.

Of both Milton and Locke, however, it may be justly observed, that apart from their great productions, on which their everlasting reputation is built, they each wrote enough to immortalize the names of any other men. The prose works of Milton, and the writings of Locke on education, on religious toleration and civil government, on almost every subject connected with the improvement and happiness of mankind, are amongst the most admirable productions in our language : they would alone have entitled their authors to the character of great men. Both lived in critical times for the safety and freedom of their native land : and setting 'Paradise Lost,' and the 'Essay concerning Human Understanding,' entirely out of view, both would be men ever to be revered, for the zeal with which they devoted their stupendous abilities to the defence of those principles of civil and religious liberty, for which their country has long been distinguished.

With respect to Newton, perhaps the *results* though not the *process*, of his researches, are still more familiar to the popular mind. By his sublime discoveries, concerning the laws and phenomena of the material universe, he opened a way for the ascent of physical science to the loftiest and clearest regions of demonstration ; from which it never can sink again into the cloudy atmosphere of conjecture. Rising on the wings of his eagle-like genius to almost superhuman heights of observation, he fixed his steady, unblenching gaze, on the great orbs of light that shine so gloriously above us. Then, descending again to earth, he was able to teach us ordinary mortals, *how* God directs the sun and

moon in their courses — *by what methods* He marshals the stars of heaven in order.


In strict propriety, I have no concern at present with the labors and characters of these great men, otherwise than as they relate to the important subject of religion. But I thought I should be pardoned for this brief allusion to their notorious merits, previous to the observations I am now about to make on their religious opinions and example. I hope to shew there is much which is common to all three, and which is highly interesting and edifying, in the characters of Milton, Locke, and Newton, regarded in this particular point of view. It is remarkable, indeed, that, notwithstanding the diversity in their circumstances, and in their natural genius, there was great similarity both in their sentiments and conduct with respect to the Christian religion. This will appear as I proceed.

I. Let me first call your attention, then, to the general consideration, that Milton, Locke, and Newton, were Christians. They were decided believers in the truth of the Christian religion ; and that, not from mere prejudice of education, but on due reflection, with an extensive knowledge of the subject, from rational and deliberate conviction. They had seriously thought of, they had closely examined, the pretensions of the gospel, as a system of divine revelation ; and the result to their minds was a settled persuasion of its heavenly origin and authority. Is not this something, in favor of the religion itself which they thus embraced ?

There is an impression on some people's minds, that men of genius since the revival of letters, men of sur-

passing talents and vast attainments, have in general been secret or avowed unbelievers in Christianity. This has been sometimes presumptuously affirmed by sceptical writers, as though it were an almost universal truth. It is still oftener covertly assumed, or insinuated, by the enemies of the gospel, as a fact not to be doubted indeed, but to be hinted at rather than told. But though the instances of this may be many, sufficiently numerous to be the subject of sincere regret to every enlightened Christian, there is yet no truth in the assumption, that men eminent for their talents have, in general, been unbelievers in the divinity of the Christian faith. The contrary is the truth ; it has been so in all ages of the Church, and it is so now. Although, doubtless, from a very early period, down to some notorious late examples, there have been men holding a high rank in the world of letters, who have utterly disbelieved, or partially assailed, (for they are not the same thing,) the truth of our most excellent religion ; yet the sanction of the majority of great characters is unquestionably and largely on the side of belief. Every person may be convinced of this, by a careful inspection of any good list of illustrious names, especially as far as relates to our own country. And even in regard to the too numerous instances of learned and philosophic sceptics, I cannot but think there have long been so many circumstances in the corrupt state of the Christian church and doctrine, peculiarly adapted to disgust their minds with a religion which they viewed in such a false light, that their unbelief is not to be very seriously thought of. It is too easily accounted for, on these and other equally obvious grounds,

to be of any authority as against the pure gospel. In many cases, it has not been properly the Christian religion which they have rejected. I judge this to be so, because it has certainly not been the Christian religion which they have attacked ; but only the gross errors which deluded men have mingled with that religion. Even lettered unbelievers have not often assailed the *evidences*, but usually the supposed *doctrines*, of Christianity : and it is a speaking fact, that they have always shown an inclination to assume the correctness of the worst, out of the many forms, in which Christianity has been held. In this they have displayed a lamentable want of candor ; for surely, in attempting to prove the falsehood of a religion claiming to be divine, it was binding on them to ascertain what the real principles of that religion are, by a careful study of its original records. Had learned sceptics taken this course, qualified as many of them were for the task by their abilities and attainments, the consequences might often have been most happy. Like him who entered the temple of God to blaspheme, but remained to praise, they might have become the ablest champions of the very faith which they thought to overthrow. Besides, even when unbelievers have made the evidence of Christianity at all the object of their attack, they have never, to the best of my knowledge, fairly grappled with that evidence *as a body* ; but have only exercised their ingenuity in weakening *certain parts* of it ; apparently assuming, that if each part be not of itself entirely free from objection, the whole must be given up as indefensible ; which is by no means a sound conclusion. For, however paradoxical it may seem, it is true, that in mor-



al inquiries the whole is often greater than all its parts ; the very concentration of so many distinct arguments upon one point being, in itself, a new and most forcible kind of evidence. The combination binds, as it were, the numerous and various probabilities together, and, united in one mass, they become demonstration. What would be thought of the Judge who, in summing up the evidence on a trial, should, in order to favor one side, employ his utmost skill in raising objections to one or two of the principal or even subordinate points, leaving all the others untouched, and especially taking no notice of the distinct and important consideration, that so many things should appear to have one bearing ? I suppose he would not be greatly admired, either for his impartiality or his acuteness. Another circumstance is, that learned unbelievers, in rejecting the commonly received hypothesis of the divine origin of Christianity, have seldom or never thought themselves called on to show the reasonableness of any other positive and complete view of the subject. Yet, as philosophers they ought to know, that in this case, as in every other, *something* must be true ; the phenomena must have a cause ; and the thinking portion of mankind will feel but little obliged to them, for unsettling their actual views of so important a matter, without giving them any other views which can satisfy a clear and sound judgment. To raise objections against any, even the strongest, moral evidence, is a very easy task indeed. But the business of an accomplished inquirer is, to weigh the objections and probabilities on both sides ; and then carefully to mark and firmly to abide by the result. For these and similar reasons ; on account of

the manifest prejudice with which many lettered sceptics have regarded Christianity ; on account of the imperfect and unfair manner in which they have generally discussed the subject ; but chiefly, on account of the false light in which they have almost always viewed the *doctrines* of the gospel ; for these reasons, I cannot allow that their unbelief is to be very seriously thought of, considered as authority against the genuine Christian religion.

But whatever judgment be passed on these remarks, let me entreat you to remember, that the three great ornaments of our country, and of our nature, to whom my present observations relate, *were not sceptics*. They were deliberate and earnest believers in the divinity of the gospel. In their eyes, this religion was not a cunningly devised fable ; not a plot devised by priests and rulers to enslave the minds of the ignorant multitude ; not a system originating entirely in the superstition of the dark ages ; but in the energetic words of Locke himself, a religion which has ‘God for its author, Salvation for its end, and Truth without any mixture of error for its matter.’ To their apprehensions, there was no want of evidence for the genuineness and authenticity of the Christian scriptures ; for the reality of the Christian miracles ; for the divine mission of Christ ; for the truth, the wisdom, the divinity of his teaching. *Their* penetration was not sufficiently strong, to discover any of those manifest signs of fraud, with which Christianity has been said to be attended ; though we cannot forget, that one of them had penetration to discern the most secret workings of the human intellect, and the other to discern those laws and motions of the universe, which

had been hidden from the knowledge of men since the world was created. They looked, long and steadily, with their searching gaze, into the sacred edifice of Christian truth ; and *they* could see nothing of that disproportion and deformity, with which some others have professed themselves to be so grievously offended. This may perhaps be called boasting on our part. But I contend that, if it is boasting, it is likewise argument. It is one presumptive argument in favor of Christianity, (as against its ordinary assailants at least,) that it has been inquired into by such men as these, and pronounced by them to be true and divine. It is some presumption of its being pure and solid truth, that it was weighed carefully in the balance of their accurate and profound judgments, and declared by them to be not wanting. Such is the real state of the case ; and it deserves to be repeatedly considered. It is not merely, that Milton, Locke, and Newton, were ostensible professors of the gospel. It is not merely, that they never thought proper openly to oppugn the truth of the Christian religion ; that they suffered themselves to pass for believers in the eyes of the world ; that from habit, or education, or philosophic indifference, or regard to public decency, they were content to worship in Christian churches, and to treat the popular religion of their day with outward respect. If this were all, their example would be of little worth in the estimation of any rational inquirer. But the circumstances are very different. These noble-minded men had diligently and deeply studied Christianity. They have each left us writings which show that, with all the aid of great knowledge and great natural sagacity combined, they had

thoroughly searched the scriptures, had inquired into the origin and history of the Christian faith. And the result of these studies, the end of this search, the issue of these inquiries, conducted by such minds, was a most determined conviction of the truth of the gospel, and an ardent attachment to all its heavenly principles.

I say again, that this is not empty boasting. It is fair presumptive argument. It well becomes the rash and superficial unbeliever to take it into his serious consideration. The Christian religion is encompassed with an exceeding great number and variety of these indirect supports ; by which a mind accustomed finely to discriminate these delicate signs of truth and error, in moral questions, will not fail to be suitably affected. The fact, that Christianity has become, and still continues to be, distinctively, the religion of the civilized parts of the earth ; the powerful influence which it has had over the minds and manners of the most enlightened nations, and we may safely add, of the most enlightened individuals ; the close and searching ordeal of inquiry to which it has often been subjected by the strongest understandings, usually coming forth like gold tried and purified in the furnace ; these, indeed, are not our proofs that Christianity is true ; but these are considerations which ought to ensure an humble and patient investigation of the question of its truth from every man, whatever may be the supposed strength of his own mind, or the extent of his knowledge. It has been sufficiently explained, I trust, that we do not desire to see the truth of the gospel blindly assumed on the mere credit due to other men's belief. Let every one, whatever may be the mediocrity of his talents or attain-

ments, search and judge for himself on this momentous subject. It is his right, his duty, so to do. But let him bear in mind, that both at the period of its first publication, and again in modern times, the gospel has been rigidly examined by men wiser and better than himself, who have rejoiced and gloried in their belief of its divine authority. From these circumstances let him draw this fair presumption, that whether he perceive it at present or not, *there must be* some very weighty evidence for Christianity ; it cannot be a mere groundless imposture, unworthy the attention of a man of cultivated intellect ; its claims to the belief and reverence of mankind cannot be so contemptible, as to justify him in passing them all over without the slightest consideration. This is the only deference for human authority which, as earnest advocates for the pure Christian religion, we should ever wish to demand. It is no more than would be granted in every similar case. It is no more than all modest and sensible men are accustomed to pay to principles which have long had the high sanction of the great and good.

II. In the next place, I observe that Milton, Locke, and Newton, were free inquirers. These illustrious men were '*more noble*' than many others, 'in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.' They were bright examples of the exercise of free inquiry, and private judgment, in religious matters. It was not enough for them, tamely to fall in with the profession of the popular sentiments and reputed orthodoxy of their age. Not content to take their views of Christianity entirely from the creeds and articles of the

Church in which they had been brought up, — too ingenuous to allow their minds to be bound down to the passive reception of such *systems of theology*, as proud and dominant sects had contrived to establish by human authority, — they felt it to be both a duty and a pleasure, to study the Christian religion thoroughly, not only in respect to its general truth, but also in order to ascertain its particular doctrines, commandments, and institutions. Thus far, at least, they acted the part of sincere and consistent disciples of their Master, Jesus Christ : they used their own free judgments in settling their views of his teaching, according to their own diligent study and private interpretation of the holy scriptures.

This feature of their characters will be made more conspicuous, when I come to speak of their actual opinions on subjects of Christian belief ; which were so different, on many points, from the prevailing notions both of their own times and of the present. But it is too well known to require this proof, that they were bold, industrious inquirers, concerning the sense of scripture and the particular truths of the gospel. Their published writings show them to have been such. They are theological authors ; and their works manifest, that they did not think it an unworthy employment of their great powers, to spend years of toil and study, in cultivating an intimate acquaintance with the riches of divine wisdom contained in the holy scriptures ; and that in their researches after truth, they were wholly unbiassed by any human systems.

In regard to Milton, many passages in his life and writings clearly prove, that his mind, ‘ in the spacious circuits of her musing,’ frequently ventured, with all

her natural boldness and freedom, among the heights and depths of revealed knowledge, and brought back treasures of heavenly truth for her recompense. But if there could have been any doubt as to his habits in this respect, it must have been completely removed, by the recent discovery of his 'Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone';—one of the most interesting events in the history of modern literature. In this treatise, Milton appears in the character of a free and fearless inquirer into the doctrines of revelation; a laborious student of Christianity, as it is taught in the sacred scriptures. He has there entered into a full investigation of all the principal controverted questions of christian théology. He has stated and defended his own private sentiments, the convictions left upon his mind after a close and serious attention to the words of the inspired writers, accompanied, as he assures us, with solemn prayer for guidance to the Father of lights, but with no slavish respect for the opinions of men.*

The example of Locke, in this particular, is too well known to require many words. His theological works

* His own words in the preface to his work are remarkable, and highly characteristic of his mind: 'Since it is only to the individual faith of each that the Deity has opened the way of eternal salvation, and as He requires that he who would be saved should have a personal belief of his own, I resolved not to repose on the faith or judgment of others in matters relating to God; but, on the one hand, having taken the grounds of my faith from divine revelation alone, and on the other, having neglected nothing which depended on my own industry, I thought fit to scrutinize and ascertain for myself the several points of my religious belief, by the most careful perusal and meditation of the holy scriptures themselves.'


have long been before the world, and are highly valued by all who take pleasure in the rational study of the sacred writings. His 'Essay on the Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures,' and his 'Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Paul,' must ever rank among the most original, and, (the latter work especially, on account of its influence on subsequent writings,) among the most important productions in English theology. Locke may be considered as the founder of a school of sound and enlightened scriptural commentary in this country; that school which seeks to ascertain the true meaning of the scriptures, by the help of solid learning, by the light of historical facts, by the knowledge of ancient opinions, manners, and customs; by diligent comparison of one part of holy writ with another, and a due regard to the original and proper aim of the several writers; by the same methods, in short, as we employ to ascertain the sense of all other ancient books;—instead of idly affixing to them any arbitrary and fanciful interpretations, in accordance with modern popular systems. What has been lately published of his more private and unfinished lucubrations, shows still further how closely he was addicted to these pursuits, and with what a happy combination of diligence and judgment he carried them on. But, without anticipating what I shall presently have to say, concerning the results of his scriptural studies, I confine myself now to the simple fact, that the writings of this most able and excellent man prove that he, like Milton, was a free and serious inquirer on religious subjects. He was neither careless nor slavish, in respect to his views on the momentous topics of christian

faith. He did not think himself bound, in any way, to submit his understanding to the implicit belief of established creeds. He did not consider himself to be stepping out of his province, as a layman and a private Christian, when he devoted himself to the patient study of the New Testament, for the purpose of distinguishing the pure doctrines of the gospel from the traditions of a corrupted church. He did not look upon the independent study and faithful exposition of the sacred writings as an occupation unworthy of a great philosopher. He was not content to regard this as the exclusive business of divines by profession ; while *his* duty was simply and submissively to receive what the ecclesiastical authorities of his day pronounced to be orthodox. In a word, he was a noble example of the exercise of free inquiry and private judgment in the affairs of religion. I may add, that he has also furnished us with a noble instance of the benefits which might be expected to result, to the Christian world at large, from the general imitation of his example, by men endowed like him with great powers of intellect, and with a pure and disinterested spirit.

In reference to Newton, it may not be quite so generally known, perhaps, that he likewise was strongly devoted to habits of religious and scriptural inquiry. We are able, however, both from his writings, and from the testimony of friends, to rank him also among the illustrious of the earth who have set mankind this good example. The bent of his genius, probably, and his scientific attainments, led him to investigate the chronology of the sacred histories, and the meaning and fulfilment of prophecies. But his inquiries were not

confined to these subjects. He also engaged in pursuits of scriptural criticism and doctrinal interpretation. Locke himself; (who was assuredly no mean judge,) says of Newton, 'In the knowledge of the scriptures I know of but few men who are his equals.' In particular, he wrote an elaborate treatise concerning the corruption of two passages of scripture, frequently appealed to in support of the doctrine of the Trinity. By profound learning, and deep research into the remains of christian antiquity, he endeavored to prove that one of these texts (1 John v. 7.) is entirely spurious; and that in the other, (1 Tim. iii. 16.) there has been a gross corruption, by the insertion of the word '*God*' where it was not found in the original scriptures. On both points, the judgment of Newton has been confirmed, and his opinion adopted, by subsequent scholars of every sect and nation.

These three great characters, then, it appears, were free inquirers in religion, and diligent students of the holy scriptures. In this respect, they gave an example, which it had been well for the Christian world if their successors, the sons of genius in after times, had faithfully copied. Religion surely claims, and merits, the best services of such men. They need not be ashamed to present the richest offerings of their superior intellect and accomplishment on her altars; not indeed by a servile homage to every superstition which may have usurped her name; but by a free and enlightened study of all her glorious truths, and of their infinitely diversified bearings upon human improvement and happiness; by seeking for themselves, and for others whom they were born to teach, out of the records of God's espe-



cial acts of providence, the knowledge of a pure, a rational, a sublime and blissful theology. Why should they, of all men, deem the highest subjects of human knowledge unfit or unworthy to occupy their attention ? Why should they, of all men, submit to be blindly guided, in these solemn and sacred matters, by the dull expounders of false and antiquated creeds ? Is not the written word of God, as well as the natural creation of God, open to their inspection ? Are not all its beauties to be discerned and illustrated by the light of reason, which shines with unusual brightness in their souls ? Christianity is not a system of mysteries, to be interpreted only by chosen and initiated priests. There is no order of men who have received from heaven the exclusive right to study, to explain, and to teach *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*. The holy scriptures are not a book to be understood and expounded by the clergy alone : they are for every man's private perusal and private interpretation ; and, surely, not least for those to whom God has imparted the choice gifts of a superior mind, a quicker moral perception and sensibility, a deeper insight into the true, the great, the good, and the beautiful. Why, then, do such men so frequently neglect their duty in this particular ? Why do they disdain to exercise this noblest privilege of their gifted natures ? I declare that few things appear to me more melancholy, or more to be regretted, than to behold how the spirit which actuated the minds of Milton, Locke, and Newton, — a spirit of serious thoughtfulness, a spirit of profound reverence for moral and divine truths, a spirit of holy curiosity, and free and active research, on all subjects of religious belief, — has

departed from among the kindred children of light, the great poets and great philosophers, of more recent times. I can imagine nothing that would be a happier omen for the cause of Christian truth and reformation, than a revival, among studious, learned, and talented laymen, of the temper and practice of the three illustrious characters to whom our attention has now been directed. Another work of equal merit, (considering the difference of circumstances,) with Locke's 'Reasonableness of Christianity,' proceeding from the pen of a man of equal standing in the literary world, in the present day, would probably do more for the best interests of divine revelation, than all the professional teachers of religion, if left to themselves, are likely to effect for a century to come. There are those among the wise and eminent of this age, who might in this way do incalculable benefit to the interests of pure religion, if they had but the inclination and the courage to undertake the service. Would that some powerful voice could incite them to this honorable task; so that the glory of God might be promoted by their labors.

III. In the third place, I remark that Milton, Locke, and Newton, were Unitarians. Having shown that they were earnest Christian believers, and free scriptural inquirers, I observe that, in respect to their particular views of Christian doctrine, they were Unitarians. I am well aware that this has been, and still is, denied by some persons. I will not designedly mislead my hearers on this point, in the slightest degree. For this reason alone, I will content myself, at present, with saying that, in my opinion, to my own conviction, they were all three Unitarians. Only let it be clearly under-

stood, that I put the assertion in this qualified form, not because I have the slightest doubt on the subject myself, but only because I am aware that others profess to doubt it, and because I am anxious not to be charged with any misrepresentation or concealment in this matter.

For the same reason, I must also explain, that by styling these illustrious men Unitarians, I do not mean to affirm that they held all and exactly the same opinions, as are entertained by the generality of those who are called by the same name in the present day. I mean only, that they were Anti-trinitarians. They did not find in the scriptures the doctrine of three persons in one God. They were not believers in the true and proper deity of Jesus Christ. They regarded the Father as the only true God, in distinction from the popular doctrine, of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, three coequal divine persons. And all who embrace such views, I consider to be justly described as Unitarians, whatever may be their opinions on other and minor points of Christian belief. Milton certainly, and Locke probably, believed in the pre-existence and super-human dignity of Jesus Christ, though not in his proper deity. Newton, I suspect, (for reasons which shall be given presently,) looked upon Jesus Christ as by nature truly and simply a human being; entrusted by God with divine powers, and a divine mission; sent by God to be the Saviour of the world; raised by Him from the dead, and exalted to glory and spiritual dominion at His right hand. But upon this I do not insist. I only contend, that these great men rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, with most of its kindred dogmas, and

therefore were Unitarians. A Unitarian is not necessarily a believer in the simple humanity of Christ. But still less is a Unitarian simply a believer in one God ; for all Christians profess to believe in only one God. A Unitarian is a Christian who believes in the strict personal unity of the Godhead, — the sole deity of the Father, — in distinction from those who believe in the tri-personality of God. In this, the original and only proper sense of the term, we claim Milton, Locke, and Newton, as true Unitarians ; and I do not see how any one, who impartially considers the evidence on the subject, can possibly deny the justice of our claims.

So far as relates to Milton, then, there is now no room for the least difference of opinion on the subject of his heterodoxy. It cannot be forgotten, indeed, that until lately, all suspicions of his unsoundness in the faith, according to the popular standard, were accustomed to be scouted by the religious world at large, as imputations upon his fair fame ; and were thought to be sufficiently confuted by a simple appeal to a few high-sounding passages in his poetical writings. But this delusion has passed away, since the recent discovery of his theological work : it is now proved, that Anti-trinitarians were right in suspecting they might claim this great spirit as a brother, in worshipping the God of their fathers after the way which men call heresy. It is now as clearly evident that Milton was a Unitarian, as that the Apostle Paul was one ; though, in my humble judgment, not a whit more so. In the production alluded to, he has made us fully acquainted with his theological views. He peremptorily denies the Trinity, and the equality of Christ with the Father. He enters into a

careful examination of all the texts and arguments commonly alleged in support of these doctrines ; refuting the false conclusions drawn from them, very much in the same method as Unitarians of the present day. He asserts and maintains, that ‘ according to the scriptures, there is in reality but one true, independent, and supreme God,’ and that, ‘ according to the testimony of Christ, delivered in the clearest terms, the Father is that one true God.’* He calls the Trinity, ‘ all that commonly-received drama of the personalities

* The following extract may afford the reader who has not seen the work, an opportunity of estimating the strength and clearness of Milton’s opinion, on this cardinal point of christian doctrine : — ‘ Christ therefore agrees with the whole people of God, that the Father is that one and only God. For who can believe that the very first of the commandments would have been so obscure, and so ill understood by the Church through such a succession of ages, that two other persons, equally entitled to worship, should have remained wholly unknown to the people of God, and debarred of divine honors even to that very day ? especially as God, where he is teaching his own people respecting the nature of their worship under the gospel, forewarns them that they would have for their God the one Jehovah whom they had always served, and David, (i. e. Christ,) for their King and Lord : Jerem. xxx. 9. In this passage Christ, such as God willed that he should be known or served by his people under the gospel, is expressly distinguished from the one God Jehovah, both by nature and title. Christ himself, therefore, the Son of God, teaches us nothing in the gospel respecting the one God but what the law had before taught, and every where clearly asserts him to be his Father. John xvii. 3, xx. 17. If therefore the Father be the God of Christ, and the same be our God, and if there be no other God but one, there can be no God beside the Father.’ — pp. 90, 91. No writer ancient or modern, perhaps, ever stated the Unitarian doctrine, or the grounds of it, more forcibly than they are set forth in these words of Milton.

in the Godhead,' and represents it as entirely without foundation in the scriptures. He says also, in regard to divine worship, that 'as the Son uniformly pays worship and reverence to the Father alone, so he teaches us to follow the same practice.' On other portions of Christian doctrine, it must be allowed that the opinions of Milton approach somewhat more closely to the likeness of reputed orthodoxy; though still, not without some considerable variations. But then, it may be justly observed, that on the points now referred to, relating particularly to the nature and means of Christian redemption, the views of most scriptural Unitarians approximate more nearly to those of intelligent and rational Trinitarians of the present day, than is commonly imagined. I have no design, however, of insinuating that the sentiments of Milton on these subjects, were identical with those of modern Unitarians. I acknowledge they were not so. I only set him forth as agreeing with us on those grand questions, the sole, unrivalled deity, and exclusive worship, of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was therefore a Unitarian, as opposed to the general body of professing Christians, who are still believers in the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity.

Let me next speak of Locke. It must be admitted, that we have no such direct and positive means of ascertaining what were *his* exact views on these important subjects. Although he published several works of a religious nature, and one in which he professedly unfolds the scheme of Christian redemption, he has nowhere stated either his belief, or his dissent, respecting the doctrines of the Trinity, and the personal Deity

of Jesus Christ. He has nowhere undertaken to discuss these subjects ; nor even avowedly to explain his own opinions upon them. All the evidence that we can have, therefore, of his actual views on these topics, must be of a presumptive and circumstantial nature. But it may not be at all the less convincing on this account. Every intelligent person will readily acknowledge, that inferential evidence may be so full and so strong, as to produce an equally rational conviction with any other kind of evidence. Let us consider, then, what grounds there are for believing that Locke also must have been a Unitarian.

Now, surely, a strong presumption that this was the case arises from the simple fact, that he has never declared or expressed himself otherwise. Is it conceivable that any person really holding the doctrine of the Trinity, and its kindred dogmas, could have written two or three considerable and systematic works on Christian theology, — in which he professes to show what in apostolic times was accounted the essential faith of a Christian, as well as to explain the sense of a large portion, and that too the most doctrinal portion, of the New Testament scriptures, — and yet that he should never record his belief in these fundamental articles of his own creed ? I say, is this conceivable ? Can any other voluminous Trinitarian author be pointed out, who has acted in such a manner ? Supposing this strange silence were in itself probable, or possible, what rational motive could have occasioned it, (for it must have required an effort,) in the instance of Locke ? Every temptation must have been on the side of an open avowal of Trinitarian sentiments, if he had really en-

tertained them. It is easy enough to imagine a reason for his not choosing to declare himself, in plain terms, an unbeliever in the popular doctrines. He might think it not at all necessary, or wise, to expose himself to the additional obloquy which such an avowal would have brought upon him, in those times especially. But why, if he believed the doctrines of the Trinitarian system, he should so carefully have concealed his belief in this respect, is a problem not easily solved. Yet so it is ; his writings are entirely Unitarian. I am not aware of a single sentiment in them which any Unitarian may not embrace ; and of very little indeed which all Unitarians do not cordially believe and approve.* What rational doubt, then, can there be, that he himself embraced the same simple and glorious faith.


*The following are passages from Locke's 'Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Paul,' in which he may naturally be expected to show the bias of his mind towards either the Trinitarian or Unitarian system of doctrine ; and the reader, after perusing them, shall judge for himself, on which side the bias lay. He thus paraphrases Romans, ix. v. 5. 'Who had the patriarchs, to whom the promises were made, for their forefathers ; and of them, as to his fleshy extraction, Christ is come ; he who is over all, God be blessed for ever, Amen.' Plainly, he was of opinion, with most Unitarians, that the latter part of the verse is an ascription of blessedness to God, even the Father, and not to Christ. 1. Corin. i. v. 2 — '*all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*' This passage he paraphrases thus, — '*all that every where are called by the name of Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours ;*' and in his note upon it he says, '*all that are called christians, these Greek words being a periphrasis for christians, as is plain from the design of this verse.*' Plainly, therefore, he did not think, with Trinitarians, that this phraseology proves anything in regard to the

This presumption is strengthened by the fact, that he was vehemently suspected and charged with being a Unitarian, in his own times, on the publication of his 'Reasonableness of Christianity;' and that though he never expressly owned it, perhaps, yet he never denied it either. One of his theological assailants on that occasion tells him plainly, that his book was 'socinianized all over;' and even entitles his own reply to it, 'Socinianism Unmasked.' How did Locke receive this accusation? Even in such provoking circumstances, he never answered the charge by declaring, or so much as intimating, his faith in the Trinitarian doctrines; which surely would have been the plain, easy, natural, unavoidable answer to such a charge, if he had been a believer in those doctrines. But he only demands of his antagonist, what right he had to assail him

supreme worship of Christ by the early disciples. Ephes. iii. v. 9. *'And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.'* This he paraphrases thus:—'lying hid in the secret purpose of God, who frames and manages *this whole new creation* by Jesus Christ;' and in his notes he says,—'it is to be observed that St Paul often chooses to speak of the work of redemption by Christ as a creation.' Plainly, therefore, he had no attachment to the Trinitarian notion that Jesus Christ was the Creator of the world, but agreed with the Unitarians, that the passages in which creation is ascribed to our Saviour refer to the new moral economy of the gospel. Lastly, there are all those passages in which Paul speaks of the 'mysteries' of the gospel dispensation, (Rom. xvi. 25, 26. Ephes. i. 9. iii. 3—9. Coloss. i. 25—27) which Locke uniformly explains, not as Trinitarians usually do, of their peculiar dogmas; but, as Unitarians do, of the calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the gospel, and other equally simple and reasonable truths.

with such an odious charge, when he had no where declared himself to be a Socinian, or undertaken to defend Socinian doctrines ? That is to say, being no sectarian polemic, but a free and independent inquirer after truth, he did not choose to acknowledge the justice of the epithet applied to him, nor to be drawn into a direct controversy on points of the Socinian creed. Still, he does not in the least modify his former sentiments. He still maintains, that if there are any other doctrines delivered in the New Testament, than those simple propositions set forth in his own work on the 'Reasonableness of Christianity,' (which he will neither be made to admit or to deny,) yet that they are certainly 'not such as our Saviour and his Apostles required to be believed, to make a man a Christian.'

By way of illustration merely, I would just observe, that there appears to be on these grounds as much evidence, and the same kind of evidence, for believing that Locke was a Unitarian, as there is for believing that Gibbon was a sceptic. The latter did not, in the celebrated chapters of his history, absolutely and expressly deny the divinity of the Christian religion ; did not avow himself an unbeliever, and openly take to himself the obnoxious name of infidel. And subsequently, when he was assailed on the subject, he contented himself with defending what he had previously written, but still without any open acknowledgment of his infidelity. Yet no one had ever doubted, or can doubt, that Gibbon was an unbeliever ; because he wrote about Christianity exactly as an unbeliever, and as no sincere believer could write. Even so it is to be presumed that Locke was a Unitarian ; because he always wrote about the Christian religion exactly as a Unitarian, and as no sincere



Trinitarian could write. I feel thoroughly persuaded, that this presumptive evidence of the heterodoxy of our illustrious countryman cannot be resisted by any unprejudiced mind.

Lastly, I contend that in the case of Locke, as in that of Milton, whatever doubts were once entertained on the subject of his Unitarianism, must have been completely removed from every impartial mind by his posthumous publications. In the interesting account of our great philosopher by Lord King, containing numerous extracts from his journals and common-place books, there are several papers on religious topics which appear to me to set the question finally at rest. I cannot, in this place, enter into any particular review of those papers; but I refer you to them with perfect confidence, that after reading them attentively, you will be as fully convinced as I am, that Locke was no believer in those strange, mysterious dogmas, which the majority of the christian church, for so many centuries, have substituted for the simple and glorious truth of the divine unity.

Concerning Newton we have the same kind of presumptive evidence to produce; confirmed however, in this instance, by the positive and credible testimony of his most intimate friends. As in the case of Locke, so it is remarkable that Newton, in all his writings on religion and the scriptures, has never once expressed his belief in the Trinity, or in the personal deity of Jesus Christ. This surely affords strong grounds for supposing that he had no faith in those doctrines. Having urged this line of argument at some length already, in speaking of Locke, I shall not here go over it again. But I must be allowed to mention, that there is a parti-

cular presumption of Newton's heterodoxy on these articles, arising from the circumstance to which I have before directed your attention ; namely, that he instituted a most careful inquiry, and wrote a very elaborate treatise, in order to prove the corruption of two of the strongest texts commonly employed to support the Trinitarian system. Is it likely he would have engaged in such a laborious research from mere curiosity, or critical taste ? Is it likely he would have taken such pains for such an object, if he had not felt interested in setting aside those texts, as false testimonies to a false doctrine ? Is it probable, when his labors terminated, (according to his own judgment at least,) in the utter destruction of these two favorite props of reputed orthodoxy, that he would have concluded his treatise without some expression of his belief, that the doctrines in question might nevertheless be defended by other texts, —if he had entertained any such belief ? Could any honest and serious Trinitarian have done less ? Yet he has not one syllable to this effect. The inference is too clear to be resisted ; he rejoiced in the issue of his inquiries ; because he looked on the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation of God as Athanasian corruptions of the pure gospel of Christ.

Again, in the course of this treatise, when speaking of the baptismal commission given by Christ to his apostles, and recorded at the close of Matthew's gospel, Newton calls it, —'the place from which THEY TRIED AT FIRST TO DERIVE THE TRINITY.' Could any conscientious Trinitarian believer have written in this manner ? It is incredible ; and I feel a thorough conviction, that these circumstances, in the total absence of

any contrary proof, ought alone to be considered decisive of the Unitarianism of this great philosopher.

But, as I have already remarked, we have the express testimony of some of his most intimate friends to the same purpose. Mr Hopton Haynes, and the celebrated William Whiston, were both long and closely connected with Newton ; the former as his fellow-servant in the King's Mint, and the other as his deputy and successor in the Mathematical Chair at Cambridge. They were both men of distinguished learning and probity, zealously devoted to religious studies. They were themselves both Unitarians, frank and open adversaries of the orthodox system ; and the former especially was the author of one of the most judicious and valuable books that has ever appeared on this controversy. There cannot be a doubt that they had both frequently conversed with Newton on religious subjects. Now, we have their testimony, that our great philosopher agreed with them, in utterly rejecting the popular doctrines, — believing in the strict unity, and sole unrivalled deity, of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have never yet seen anything calculated, in the least degree, to throw discredit on this testimony. It is fully equal to that upon which we receive many highly important facts, in history and biography, which are in themselves not unreasonable or improbable.*

* The testimony of Mr Haynes has been conveyed to us by a third person. It is to be found in a work entitled, 'A Cordial for Low Spirits, being a collection of curious tracts. London, 1763.' *Preface*, p. xviii. The author of this preface was the Rev. Richard Baron, of Blackheath, a General Baptist Minister ; and, it is believed, a man of unimpeachable character. He says in the place above referred to ;—'Hopton Haynes, Esq. was author of several writ-

Such, then, is the evidence on which we rest the truth of our assertion, that in regard to their particular views of christian doctrine, Milton, Locke, and New-

ings well known to the curious; he served many years in the Mint Office, under Sir Isaac Newton, and at the time of his death, had a place in the Exchequer. (I think he died in the year 1749.) He was the most zealous Unitarian I ever knew; and in a conversation with him on that subject, he told me that Sir Isaac Newton did not believe our Lord's pre-existence, being a Socinian, as we call it, in that article. Sir Isaac Newton predicted the restoration of primitive truth, in these memorable words to Mr Haynes, — The time will come, when the doctrine of the incarnation as commonly received, shall be exploded as an absurdity equal to transubstantiation ! '

The testimony of Whiston we have directly from himself. It is to be found in his work entitled, ' A Collection of Authentic Records belonging to the Old and New Testament, translated into English by William Whiston, M. A., sometime Professor of the Mathematics in the University of Cambridge, London, 1728.' Vol. 2, p. 1077. The article is on Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology; and the passage is as follows;—' In particular, Sir Isaac Newton was one who had thoroughly examined the state of the church in its most critical juncture, the fourth century. He had early and thoroughly discovered that the old Christian faith, concerning the Trinity in particular, was then changed; that what has been long called Arianism, is no other than old uncorrupt Christianity; and that Athanasius was the grand and the very wicked instrument of that change. This was occasionally known to those few who were intimate with him all along; from whom, notwithstanding his prodigiously fearful, cautious, and suspicious temper, he could not always conceal so important a discovery. Nor need I now crave the reader's belief of my testimony in this case. Sir Isaac Newton has left not a few undeniable testimonials of it behind him; witness his MSS. dissertations upon two of the famous New Testament texts, concerned in that controversy; 1 Tim. iii 16, and 1 John, v. 7, both whose present readings he took to be Athanasian interpolations.'

ton, were Unitarians. I trust I have shown to your complete satisfaction, that it is on no very insufficient grounds we venture to rank these men among the great, the wise, the learned and the good, who in all ages of the church, amidst corruption and persecution, have been witnesses to this pure faith *once delivered to the saints*. That we should be desirous by all fair means to establish our fellowship with them in religious belief, cannot reasonably surprise any one. We say indeed of the Unitarian doctrine, as we said before of Christianity itself, that we wish no man to receive it on the mere credit due to other men's opinions. Let every one, mindful of his individual responsibility to God, carefully examine into its truth and accordance with the Holy Scriptures. But here again we say, let every one be assured that, whether he perceive it at present or not, *there must be* some weighty evidence in favor of this doctrine ; otherwise it never could have recommended itself to the calm and patient judgment of such inquirers, — so earnestly intent upon the discovery of the truth, and so highly qualified for the work. As a final test of the truth or falsehood of the Unitarian doctrine, the sanction of these or of any other great men is of no validity ; nor do we wish ever to see it applied in this way. But as a confutation of many absurd reproaches, which ignorant or arrogant men have attempted to cast upon our dearest convictions, the fact of their having been embraced by these great characters is unanswerable. The faith which has been solemnly entertained by such minds *cannot be*, what proud ecclesiastics, in their spite and impotence, have dared to call it, ' a feeble and conceited heresy.' It

has satisfied the understandings, charmed the hearts, and sanctified the lives, of much wiser and better men than many of those who have reviled it.

IV. I regret that the time I have already occupied your attention, will not allow me to dwell, as I could willingly do, on the remaining consideration. It is much too important, however, to be passed over in total silence. I must not neglect to remind you, in conclusion, that these great and renowned men were exemplary *practical* Christians in heart and life. In character and conduct, they were worthy disciples of that heavenly Master, in whose teaching they so much delighted. Though addicted, as we have seen, to habits of free and diligent inquiry, though anxious to attain a pure and scriptural faith, (in which to a great degree they were successful,) yet they did not suppose that a correct *knowledge* of Christianity was all that is required of its professors. They knew it was intended to regulate their dispositions and actions, and to these practical purposes they faithfully applied all its holy principles. Not a serious stain of any kind is to be discovered on their characters! Not a shadow of immorality, of any description, obscures the brightness of their imperishable fame!

Milton's soul was evidently animated with that spirit of strong and fervent piety, which belonged to most of the great actors on the stage of life, in his busy and turbulent times. But I am not aware of any proof, that he was in the smallest measure subject to the folly and fanaticism by which their piety was too often disfigured. He felt the influence of sacred truths work-

ing mightily upon all the faculties, intellectual and moral, of his gigantic mind ; chastening, expanding, and elevating all his private affections ; filling his soul, in her moments of solitude, with all kinds of pure and heavenly meditations ; strengthening his heart to do his duty manfully in the walks of public life, in the glorious conflict for liberty and truth ; guiding him, throughout his years of activity, to deeds of disinterested virtue and heroic patriotism ; and finally consoling him in his last desolate days, when he was left to mourn apart, in affliction, poverty and blindness.

For our incomparable Locke, his whole life appears to have been one uninterrupted course of innocence, piety and goodness. The purity of all his dispositions and habits, and his filial tenderness and fidelity, in his youth ; his high-minded contempt of worldly gains and honors, which courted his acceptance, in his manhood ; his unwearied, amiable endeavors, to serve his friends and fellow creatures on all occasions ; the cheerful piety with which he endured his complicated pains and sufferings for so many years ; and at last, the calm and dignified spirit of resignation in which he met approaching death ; — all together afford a beautiful and almost unparalleled example of christian excellence.

In what relates to Newton, although he apparently had to struggle with some serious natural infirmities of temper, yet he seems, by the christian simplicity and integrity of his character, ever to have maintained a place in the esteem and love of all that knew him well. There are few passages of personal history more interesting and affecting, than the account of the tempora-

ry disagreement, and permanent and cordial reconciliation, between Locke and Newton.* 'Therein, we may witness a moral scene highly worthy of our contemplation. The greatest philosopher of that or of almost any age, conscious that he had erred, feeling that by hasty and groundless suspicions he has wronged his virtuous friend, bows himself down like a very child, and in sorrow and shame entreats forgiveness. And that mistrusted friend, himself one of the noblest intellectual benefactors of his race, instantly replies to the entreaty with a humility, a frankness and a grace, which makes his character, on other accounts so great, appear withal exceeding amiable. It is a portion of their history that affords us, incidentally, a bright glimpse of the genuine, the unostentatious christian virtues, which belonged to these truly venerable sages. In understanding they were perfect men : in malice they were like babes.

In these respects, then, the example of Milton, Locke, and Newton, is one of very precious value. How happy would it have been for the cause of religion, how happy for the world, if men distinguished by their *mental superiority*, had always been careful to exhibit similar examples of *moral worth* ! How beautiful the character in which these perfections unite ! How well the presence of each becomes the other ! How glorious to see a life of innocence and piety recommended to the notice and the veneration of millions, by being associated with exalted powers of intellect, with vast

* See the Letters between them in Lord King's Life of Locke. Vol. I. pp. 417 — 419.

acquirements in knowledge, or with the achievement of great and famous deeds ! Finally, however, in regard to these, their *moral* qualities, even the humblest of men may aspire to emulate the great ones of the earth. We may aim to accomplish this, if we can accomplish nothing more. Let us resolve to do so ; and it will not be altogether in vain that we have been engaged in considering the religious opinions and example of these illustrious characters. May the one true God whom we worship, through Jesus Christ our Lord, crown our meditations and resolves with his blessing.

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EXPLANATION OF ISAIAH, IX, 6.

ISAIAH, IX, 6.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

THIS passage has been commonly understood as predicting the birth of Jesus Christ. It is true that some critics of considerable eminence, among whom is the celebrated Grotius, have considered the passage as relating, in its primary sense, to Hezekiah, the son of the impious king Ahaz, in whose reign it was pronounced. But it is not my purpose to discuss the question of the proper application of the passage. Without deciding for or against the common application of it, I shall endeavor to explain it in reference to Jesus, and to fix your thoughts on those points of his character and office, which the several expressions in it may suggest.

The expressions in the passage are evidently borrowed from a style of royalty. They indicate the birth

of a prince, the heir of a throne. Applied to Jesus they represent him as a king, and the establishment of his religion as the setting up of a kingdom. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son, i. e. a king's son, is given, and the government shall rest upon his shoulder; i. e. he shall bear the burden of government, as a load is usually borne upon the shoulder. Or the government may be said to be upon his shoulder, because the purple robe, or the regal sceptre, the emblems of government, usually rested upon the shoulder. It is manifest that our Saviour is called a king only in a figurative sense. For how little did his character, or condition, resemble those of any sovereign, that ever occupied a throne. In respect to the character of the governor, the nature of the government, the manner in which it was established and is continued, and the benefits resulting to the governed, how different is the kingdom of Jesus from the kingdoms of this world !

What are the benefits to be derived from the best of human governments compared with that rest to the soul, which is found by those, who take upon themselves the yoke of the prince of life ? What is security to natural life, compared with the everlasting happiness of that part of ourselves, which shall never see death ? What is the liberty that can be guarantied by the most perfect civil government, compared with the glorious liberty from degrading habits, from tyrannical passions, from oppressive anxieties and tormenting fears, which belongs to the voluntary followers of the prince of peace ? And what are the rewards, which a human government can confer, compared with a victory over death and the grave, and an immortality, incorruptible,

undefiled, and that never fades away ? Well did the Saviour exclaim, *My kingdom is not of this world.*

Another lesson you may draw from the expression, *The government shall be upon his shoulder* ; viz. the iniquity of the usurpation of the government of the church by sinful mortals. God has made Jesus head over all things to the church. Let, then, the government rest upon his shoulder, where the pen of the prophet declared it should rest. Let not the professed subjects of Jesus presume to dictate what men shall believe, or what they shall reject, in order to enjoy the privileges of his spiritual kingdom. The head of the church is abundantly able to protect all its interests, and to bear all the burdens, and discharge all the duties, of its government. Let not then vain man imagine defects in the government of Jesus. Let him not act on the supposition that he has intrusted his subjects with too much freedom. Let him not dare to abridge the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free. Let him not dare to stand before that door, which Jesus hath left open, saying, *Behold I have set before you an open door*, with a creed in one hand and an anathema in the other, and exclude the guests, whom Jesus invites to enter.

My friends, there is reason enough for these cautions. It is a melancholy, an awful truth, that even in this commonwealth, the holy ordinance of the supper, the memorial of him, who came to give us perfect freedom, is made an instrument of spiritual slavery. — It is a solemn truth, that many of the churches around us are nothing less than prisons of the human soul ; yea, the very graves of free inquiry. This is the case in all those churches, where the rejection of an opinion once

professed is treated as a crime, and stigmatised as the breach of a solemn covenant, and the violation of an oath, subjecting the offender to censure and exclusion.

The prophet goes on to declare that his name shall be called *wonderful*. By an idiom of the Hebrew language, the word *name*, it may be observed, is here redundant. His *name* shall be called, is the same as, *he* shall be called. So to call upon the name of the Lord is the same as to call upon the Lord. It is evident that the prophet did not intend to predict the proper name of the Saviour, but only those qualities and circumstances of his character, which should merit and receive the splendid epithets, contained in the passage.

He shall be called *wonderful*. The propriety of this epithet is seen at once by every one, who remembers anything of the birth, the youth, the spirit and character, the good deeds and wise instructions, the dignity and the humiliation, the life and the death of Jesus. He was wonderful in being welcomed into the world by the homage of sages, and the songs of angels ; in his increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man ; in his conversation with the wise men of his nation, when only twelve years old ; in receiving the holy spirit without measure, and in being addressed by the voice from heaven, ' This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased ; ' wonderful in all the words, which he spake, and all the acts, which he performed ; in his superiority to his nation, and his age ; in the vast extent of his conceptions, the sublimity of his doctrines, and the unrivalled excellence of his precepts ; in piety to God, and benevolence to man ; and above all, in the generous sacrifice of his life for the salvation of the

world ; in the miraculous phenomena that accompanied his death ; in his speedy return from the mansions of the dead, and in his glorious ascension to the right hand of God. Well then might the pen of inspiration predict that he would be called *wonderful*.

The next epithet applied to him is that of *counsellor*. And the propriety of this epithet will appear evident, when it is considered what was the source of his wisdom, and what the character of his instructions. He is a counsellor, because the spirit of the Lord rested upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. He was in the bosom of the Father ; he drank in wisdom from the pure fountain of eternal truth ; in him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. What question is there worthy of an immortal being to ask, which the great counsellor will not answer ? He may not, indeed, throw light upon your schemes for laying up the treasures which the moth and rust may corrupt ; but he will tell you how to use them, so that when they fail, ye shall be received into everlasting habitations. He may not gratify your curiosity in questions of doubtful disputation, or communicate that knowledge of the material world, which the faithful exertion of your own faculties will enable you to acquire. But ask of him the character of the great Being, who is the arbiter of your condition in this world and the future ; ask of him the origin, the nature, the duty and the destination of man ; ask of him the source, and the design of the blessings you receive, and of the calamities, that befall you ; ask him how a sinner can be reconciled to God ; and gain the favor

of Him, whose hand moves the springs of your happiness or misery ; ask him, what will become of you, when your bodies shall be mingled with dust, and scattered to the winds of Heaven ? In regard to all these questions the great counsellor will give you more satisfaction than all the mighty masters of philosophy that preceded, yea, more than all that have followed him.

To this great counsellor, my friends, apply for instruction. Like Mary, sit at his feet ; listen to all the words which proceed from his mouth ; follow him with his disciples from place to place ; witness all his miracles ; observe all his conduct ; treasure up all his declarations ; and in life and in death, in time and in eternity, believe me, you will find him a counsellor, whom you will never repent to have consulted, and whom you will never repent to have followed.

The passage we are considering, according to the common translation, goes on to declare that the child that was to be born should be called *the mighty God*. Upon this expression I remark first, that for the particle *the* before the terms *mighty God* and *everlasting Father*, there is no foundation in the original. And I am happy to observe it expelled from the passage, in a recent translation of it in the most learned orthodox journal* in this country. Leaving out the particle *the*, the passage will read, He shall be called *mighty God*. If this translation be correct, the meaning is, that Jesus, in his regal character, as the Messiah, the son of God, and head of the church, should possess such mighty power and such superior wisdom, that he should be called, as it

* The Biblical Repository, printed at Andover, Numb. for July, 1831, p. 522.

were, a God upon earth. It was not uncommon, as is well known, in ancient times, to give the name of God to persons distinguished by the dignity of their stations, or the importance of their office, or the excellence of their character. Thus Moses, on account of the miracles he was instrumental in performing, is said to have been a God to Pharaoh. And if Moses might be called *God*, without danger of being identified with the Creator of the Universe, a greater than Moses might be called *mighty God* by a similar use of language. So kings and princes are called Gods, as 'I have said ye are Gods, and all of you children of the most high.'* So our Saviour observes, that 'He called them gods, to whom the word of God came.' †

That the epithet, *mighty God*, was used to denote qualities of character, or dignity of station, and not to designate or name the person, to which it is applied, is also evident from the following consideration. All the other epithets, applied to the child in this verse, confessedly denote qualities of character, or circumstances of condition. The terms *wonderful*, *counsellor*, *everlasting father*, *prince of peace*, are all used to indicate *what sort* of a person the child should be, not *who* he should be. And it is extremely improbable that *in the midst* of four epithets, all descriptive of qualities of character, a fifth should be inserted, giving him a proper name, or declaring *who* he should be. This would be a violation of propriety of language, not to be expected from Isaiah. Jesus, then, according to the Jewish use of language, might be called *mighty God* on account of his miracu-

* Ps. lxxxii. 6.

† John x. 35.

lous powers and marvellous wisdom, and glorious exaltation, in perfect consistency with the truth that 'he could do nothing of himself,' that all power 'was given' him, and that all his fulness was derived from the good pleasure of his Father. Thus the prophet is not the author of a proposition so contradictory as that a child to be born, and destined to sit on the throne of David, should be the eternal Creator, the Governor of the Universe. It is only a strange inattention to the use of language among the Hebrews that will allow such a proposition to be drawn from the passage.*

I have thus far considered the expression *mighty God* to be a correct translation of the original, and endeavored to explain it in consistency with the derived and dependent nature of Jesus. It is a fact, however, that the Hebrew word rendered God in this verse, and which

* The term *Immanuel*,† *God-with-us*, I regard as an expression somewhat different from that under consideration. The emphatic word in that symbolical name appears to me to be the particle *with*; which has the same meaning as in Ps. xlii. 11. The Lord of hosts is *with us*, the God of Jacob is *our refuge*. The true meaning of this symbolical name would appear more clearly, if it were translated, *God-will-help-us*. This name was undoubtedly given to a child, that was to be a proof to Ahaz, king of Judah, of the speedy deliverance of his kingdom from the invasion of the combined forces of the kings of Israel and Syria. Of course it was applied originally to a child to be born in the time of the prophet Isaiah. For, to use the language of professor Stuart, of Andover, 'How could the birth of Jesus, which happened 742 years afterwards, be a sign to Ahaz, that *within three years* his kingdom was to be freed from his enemies? Such a child, it would seem, was born at that period; for in ch. viii. 8, 10, he is twice referred to, as if then present, or at least, then living.'—Stuart's Comment. on Hebrews, vol. II. p. 335.

† Isaiah vii. 14.

is often correctly rendered so in other parts of the scriptures, has another meaning, and one more appropriate in this verse than that of the common version. It denotes *a man of strength, a hero, or potentate*. The very same word is applied to Nebuchadnezzar in Ezek. xxxi. 11. where he is styled the *mighty one* of the nations. Here the original word might be rendered *God* of the nations, with as much propriety, so far as the word itself is concerned, as in the verse under consideration. In Ezek. xxxii. 21, the same word, in the plural, is translated *strong*; 'the *strong* amongst the *mighty*.' Here, too, the translation might be, 'the *gods* among the *mighty*.' The same word is rendered *the mighty*, in Job, xli. 25. And it appears to me that a similar translation is more proper here, where the expressions are evidently borrowed from the language of royalty, and the Messiah is supposed to be represented in his kingly character. In this way Martin Luther, who cannot be suspected of any sectarian bias, translated the word in his German version of the bible. In place of the terms *mighty God*, he has *mighty, hero*. In the same way the first living Hebrew scholar in the world, the German Gesenius, renders the word. This expression, therefore, applied to the Messiah, declares that he should be called *mighty hero, or mighty potentate*, in reference to his exaltation to be a prince and a saviour, anointed by God with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and whom every tongue must confess to be Lord, *to the glory of God the Father*. At the same time, if any prefer the common translation, *mighty God*, the expression may be explained, in the manner above-mentioned, in perfect consistency with the derived power and entire depen-

dence of Jesus upon 'his Father and our Father, his God and our God.'

The next epithet, applied in the verse to the child that was to be born, is that of *everlasting father*; by which is meant, that he would be the perpetual father, benefactor, or guardian* of his people. In a similar, though a less important sense, a good prince, or ruler, who has conferred great benefits on the land of his birth, is said to have been the Father of his country. The term everlasting has no reference to the past, but only to the future. It means ever-enduring, or perpetual, as in the phrases everlasting happiness, everlasting mercy. Jesus, then, according to the promise, will be the perpetual father of his people. He will watch over the interests of the church, as a father over the interests of his children. He will strengthen their weakness; he will console their sorrows; he will animate their fainting spirits; and he will ever make intercession for them before the throne of God. This prophecy that he will be the everlasting, or perpetual, father of his people, appears to mean nearly the same thing with the promise, 'Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world;' i. e. I will always aid you, and interpose my good offices in your behalf. Whether Jesus is personally employed on earth as the invisible agent of the Most High for the benefit of the church, or only by means of the instructions, hopes and consolations of his religion, and as their intercessor in heaven, is a question, upon which there may be different opinions.

* In this explanation of the expression *everlasting father*, I am glad to have the support of professor Stuart of Andover. See *Biblical Repository* for October, 1831, p. 746.

In either case, we may regard him with interest and affection, as the everlasting or perpetual friend of his people.

The last epithet bestowed upon Jesus in the passage, is that of *prince of peace*. And a prince of peace he was in three different senses. First, he came to make us at peace with God ; to reconcile us to his Father ; to purify us from those sins that separated us from our God. Thus it is said by the Apostle, ‘ We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

Again, he is the prince of peace, as he came to promote peace between man and man ; to subdue those passions, from whence come wars and fightings ; and to establish in the souls of men those feelings of justice, kindness, forgiveness, and humility, which are calculated to maintain perpetual peace. Only let nations and individuals be deeply imbued with the principles of the prince of peace, and the sword will be beaten into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning hook, and men will learn war no more.

Lastly, he is the prince of peace, as he is the author of inward peace, or tranquillity of heart. It is only by coming to him, and imbibing his piety, his benevolence, his meekness and lowliness of heart, that we can find rest unto our souls. Thus alone can we find peace ; the peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It is pride, selfishness, irreligion, envy, malice, and revenge, that are the sources of most of the misery of the human heart. When these demons have been expelled from the soul through the aid of christian precepts, hopes, and promises, and when faith, hope and

charity, have taken their place, then at length we shall be at peace with God, at peace with man, and at peace with our own souls. This glorious effect Jesus came to produce ; and he has produced it in the hearts of thousands. Well then may he be styled the prince of peace.

Such is the character of him upon whose shoulders the government of the church is laid. He is *wonderful* in all his attributes. He is a *counsellor* who resolves all our doubts, and who alone can show us the way to eternal happiness ; he is a *mighty potentate*, who is endowed with all the powers necessary for the establishment and security of his kingdom ; he is the *everlasting, or perpetual, father* of those, who put themselves under his government ; and he is the *prince of peace*, to all his obedient followers.

What reason have we, as Christians, to rejoice that such a child was born, that such a son was given ; one that can dissipate our darkness, and illumine our minds ; can calm the conscience and make us at peace with God, with man, and with our own souls ; can free us from the misery of tyrannical passions ; can encourage with paternal tenderness our feeble steps ; can deliver us from the sting of death, and the terrors of the grave, and discover to us immortal happiness. With what alacrity should we embrace the privilege of being subjects of his kingdom ! With what fidelity should we follow him as the captain of our salvation ! With what ardent zeal should we heed his admonitions ; listen to his instructions ; mark his example, and obey his laws ; and with what earnest gratitude should we thank God, who laid help upon one that was so mighty to save !

With what joy should we regard the fulfilment of this prophecy,

For unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given ;
And the government shall be upon his shoulder ;
And he shall be called wonderful,
Counsellor, mighty potentate,
Everlasting father, prince of peace.

EXPLANATION OF JOHN, I, 1.

JOHN, I, 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

IN the following explanation, I shall maintain, that the *word* of God is no more a distinct person from God, than the word of a man is a distinct person from the man.

Jesus spake as never man spake, and performed what never man performed. His discourses and his deeds, were super-human. The evangelist John, in the beginning of his gospel, accounts for the supernatural character of the discourses and actions of Jesus. This he does by declaring, that the *word* i. e. *the energy or the wisdom and power* of God, was united with Jesus, or dwelt in him.

But how is it, that the term *word* denotes the energy, or the wisdom and power, of God? Perhaps we may answer this question without going beyond the sacred volume for help.

In the first chapter of Genesis, the creation, in its

successive stages, is said to have been the result of *the word*, or *command*, of God. 'God said, Let there be light, and there was light, &c.' So in the Book of Psalms we read, 'He *spake*, and it was done ; he *commanded*, and it stood fast.*' And again, 'By the *word* of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth.†' So in regard to other operations of God, we read, 'He *spake* and the locusts came, &c ;' and again, 'He sendeth forth his *commandment* upon the earth ; his *word* runneth very swiftly.‡' This then was the ancient mode, in which the operations of the Deity in the world were represented ; viz. as proceeding from a word or command. But when the Jews began to affix an exact meaning to expressions of Scripture, they could not help perceiving, that it was not by a literal, audible word, or command, that the divine operations were performed. They could not help perceiving, that the ascription of a real voice, or tongue, or lips to the Deity, was inconsistent with his character, as an immaterial spirit. How natural, then, was it for them to give a new, and more spiritual meaning to the term *word*? How natural that they should understand by the term, that *energy* or *those attributes*, by which a word or command of God would be executed. I believe that the fact corresponds to the presumption here stated ; and that, in the time of the Evangelist John, the term *logos*, or *word*, was used by many to denote that energy, or those attributes of God, which are manifested in his operations in the world, i. e. *the power* and *wisdom* of God.

*Ps. xxxiii. 9. †Ps. xxxiii. 6. ‡Ps. cxlvii. 15.

In the last verse quoted from the Psalms, where 'the *word* of God' is said to 'run very swiftly,' we find the term so far personified, as to have life, and action, attributed to it. In some of the Apocryphal writings we may observe the same thing in a still higher degree. Thus, speaking of the destruction of the Egyptians, the writer says, 'Thine almighty *word* leapt down from heaven, from his royal throne, a fierce warrior, into the midst of a land of destruction.'* In the Book of Wisdom, ix, 1, the term is used as parallel with wisdom, i. e. as having a similar signification with it. This writer uses the language, 'God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things with thy *word*, and ordained man through thy *wisdom*.'

Thus the term *word* came to have a new and more spiritual meaning than originally belonged to it, and was used to denote the *energy* or the *power and wisdom* of God, manifested in the creation and instruction of the world, which in popular language used to be represented as the result of his word or command. The Evangelist uses the term *word* as denoting neither an articulate sound, nor yet as a real person, or intelligent agent, but a portion of the divine attributes personified. In the same way the term *wisdom* is personified in the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs, and indeed the term *word* itself in Heb. iv. 12, &c, where it is said to be 'quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' It is impor-

*Wisdom of Sol. xviii, 15.

tant to keep in mind that the *word* is represented as a figurative, though not a real, person ; otherwise this explanation may appear to be harsh. But any one, who attends to the above-mentioned personification of wisdom, and to the personification of sin, death, and the grave, in the writings of St Paul and in the Apocalypse, may find this explanation attended with at least as little difficulty as any other. In order, then, to convey to a certain class of his readers the idea of a spiritual teacher endowed with divine wisdom and power, St John declares that *the word*, in the sense above ascribed to it, was, in the Messiah, manifested to the world in a human form.

'In the beginning,' i. e. before the foundation of the world, *'was the word,'* i. e. the divine power and wisdom; *'and the word was with God,'* i. e. was always in his presence, ready to execute his purposes, *'and the word was God,'* i. e. had no existence independent of, and separate from him, but was an essential part of the divine nature.

'By it,' i. e. by this word, or divine power and wisdom, *'were all things made,'* v. 3; and by the same was an influence exerted to enlighten and save the world, which influence the world long resisted, v. 4, 5, &c. At length this word, or divine power and wisdom, was manifest to the world in a human form, and enabled the Messiah to perform those miracles and teach those doctrines which could have proceeded only from the power and wisdom of God.

The advantage of this explanation is, that it supposes the term God to be used in the same sense in both cases, where it occurs in the first verse. This is not

the case on the Trinitarian hypothesis, or any other, which makes the term *word* denote a real person. For, in this case, the verse would read, 'In the beginning was the son, and the son was with the Father and Spirit, and the son was the Father and Spirit.' It would imply, that a person might be said to be with another, and yet be that other person with whom he was just said to be. Whereas, if we understand the *word* to denote the divine energy, or the divine power and wisdom, by which his operations in the world are performed, nothing can be more proper than to assert that wisdom and strength are with God* and that they are God, i. e. have no existence separate from him, but are a part of the divine nature.

In regard to the expression, 'The word became flesh,' it may be remarked that the Trinitarian cannot understand it more literally than it is understood in the above explanation. For he will not pretend that the eternal Spirit was actually changed into flesh and blood. He will say that the Supreme Being was united with Jesus without undergoing any change. So I maintain that *the word*, in the sense above explained, was united with Jesus, and enabled him to act, and to teach, as he could not have done, had not the spirit of God been poured upon him without measure.

It may also be remarked that, according to the above explanation, *the word*, and *the spirit*, of God, are used by the evangelist as nearly equivalent. For both these expressions denote the divine power and wisdom, to which Jesus referred his works and doctrines.† So in the old Testament the creation is sometimes ascribed to the word,

* See Job, xii, 18.

† See John, iii, 34, 35.

and sometimes to the spirit of God.* From the circumstance that the Evangelist uses the term *word* only once, and the term *spirit* frequently, to denote the source of the supernatural character of Jesus, we may infer, that the latter term was most common, and most familiar to him, as having been used by Jesus; and that he used the term *word*, in the beginning of the gospel, in reference to some question that had arisen concerning it; or as likely to be better understood than the term *spirit* by a portion of those, whom he addressed.

In conclusion, I remark that, while I am free to confess, that I have yet some doubts remaining in regard to the exact explanation of this, as of other passages of Scripture, yet I have a deep conviction, that the Trinitarian exposition of it is attended with far greater difficulties than any other, even if we look not beyond the passage itself. But when I take into view the doctrine, that shines on every page of the gospel of St John, concerning the derived and dependent powers of Jesus, the Trinitarian hypothesis appears to me to be at an immeasurable distance from the truth.

It is, indeed, said, by Trinitarians, that those passages, which represent Jesus as dependent upon and inferior to, the Father, are to be understood of his *human nature*. When we urge the passage, *The Father is greater than I*,† or that of another Evangelist, *Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels that are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father*,‡ they reply, that it is only *as man* that he says, that the Father is greater than he, and that it is only *as man*, that he knew not the day and the hour, &c.

* See Job, xxvi, 13.

† John xix. 28.

‡ Mark xiii. 32.

But, as has been observed by a distinguished writer, 'in order to apply this answer to the passages, which represent Jesus Christ as inferior to his Father, it ought to appear very clearly from scripture, that there are two natures in Christ, one divine, and the other human. But this is what does not appear from the sacred writings. There is not a single passage, which obliges us to regard Jesus Christ as the supreme God. There is nothing, therefore, which authorises us to make this distinction.'

'One cannot apply this distinction to the passages of scripture in question, without doing violence to them, without attributing to them a mode of speaking, unknown to all languages, and contrary to all the rules of language. In effect, by these rules, one may indeed attribute to a whole, what agrees to some one of its parts; but one cannot deny of a whole, what agrees to one of the parts, which compose it. For example, I can say of a man, that he thinks, and that he is extended ; because there is in him something that thinks, and that is extended; but I cannot say of a man, he does not think, he is not extended, under pretence that there is in him something that does not think, and something that is not extended. Thus, supposing that Jesus Christ be the Supreme God, he cannot say, that he knows not the day of judgment, as on this supposition he knows it in an infallible manner by his divinity. He cannot say in a general manner, and without any limitation, that this day is unknown to him, without violating the truth. The language, which they have made Jesus Christ employ, in supposing that he had present to his mind this imaginary distinction, resembles that, which I might

hold, if, when interrogated by a judge concerning facts which are very well known to me, I should reply, that they were unknown to me, under pretence that my *body* had no knowledge of them. It is as if, when one asked me if I had seen such a person, I should answer, no ; because when I saw him, I had one of my eyes shut, and did not see him with that eye. It is as if, when one should desire me to write upon some subject, I should reply, that I was not able to write, because *my mind* could not hold a pen. There is nobody, who does not see, how absurd such a mode of speaking would be.

‘If we examine the passages, to which the orthodox apply this distinction, we shall find that it cannot take place. In effect, Jesus Christ is most frequently represented here as the Son of God, i. e., according to the system of the Orthodox, as God. One cannot therefore say, that it is as man that Jesus Christ speaks on these occasions; for example, in the passage we have already quoted, Jesus Christ says, ‘as for that day, and that hour, no man knoweth it, not the angels who are in heaven, nor even the son but the father.’ *No man knows it*, neither the angels, nor even the son, that is, not Christ himself, considered as exalted above the angels, considered as the son of God; as God, according to that system ; one cannot therefore say, that it was as man that Jesus Christ speaks in this passage. He excludes even this, when he says, *no man*. In effect, when the disciples addressed this request to Jesus Christ, ‘Tell us when these things shall come to pass,’ they did not merely ask him what he might know of them, by lights natural to humanity ; they addressed themselves to him, as the son of God; they wished to enjoy

a share of that knowledge, which Jesus might possess in this regard, in consequence of his intimate union with the Deity. It follows, therefore, that Jesus Christ must be absolutely ignorant of the time of the last judgment to answer as he did; and that there is not in Jesus Christ those two natures, which serve for the basis of that distinction they have systematically framed; and that this distinction must be vain and chimerical.'

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PRESUMPTIVE ARGUMENTS

IN FAVOR OF

UNITARIANISM.

THE object of the ensuing essay, is by a comparison of Unitarianism with the popular system of orthodoxy, in some of its leading doctrines, to point out the *probabilities* in its favor. The probabilities, we mean, antecedent to any direct proofs derived from the authority of scripture. These probabilities we denominate 'presumptive arguments.' We regard these as highly important, and worthy of deeper attention than they seem to have generally received. In our view they are decisive of the question at issue. For, unless we are altogether deceived, they throw on our opponents a burden of proof which they cannot sustain. They will hardly deny, we think, that our scheme of interpretation, as applied to the New Testament, is at least a *plausible one*. They will not deny that there is a show of reason in the solutions we give of the debatable points between us; or that the *general tenor* of this book *may* be regarded as consistent with our views of divine truth. Thus much, we believe, they must, in common fairness, admit. Now this *admission*, as we hope to show, will

be sufficient for us, and fatal to them. For we expect to make it appear, that, if the scriptures *can* be *even plausibly* interpreted, consistently with our system of doctrines, then these doctrines must be true. This is what we propose ; and, in so far as we are successful in accomplishing our purpose, we think we shall render a service to the cause of truth. Something of this sort seems to us to be required in order to present the question in a proper point of view. We wish to give our doctrines a fair chance ; to secure for them an impartial trial. We wish that the testimony of scripture may have an opportunity of being applied according to the real merits of the case. But at present it is not so. Inquirers come to the examination of this subject with crude, or false conceptions of the question at issue, the points on which it turns, and the nature and degree of proof which the subject requires. Many seem to have taken the impression, that Unitarianism is something strange and startling, every step of which is to be clearly made out by invincible and direct proofs ; and fortified by a chain of demonstrations wrought out from scripture authority, link by link. This view of the subject is certainly not a correct one ; and we hope to make it appear that it is not. Yet it is a very common one, and the result of very obvious causes. Orthodoxy has so long had possession of the public mind, that its roots have spread far, and struck deep. It has infused its spirit into the whole mass of our literature. It has tinged the very atmosphere through which the light of heaven visits our eyes. It has tainted the very springs and vehicles of thought. It is no wonder, that those who come to the study of this question in the scriptures,

with minds preoccupied by artificial formulas, inculcated from infancy into the warm and yielding texture of the growing intellect ; with prejudices trained and fostered till they have overgrown the whole mind, should find in the scriptures the very things they come to look for. It were strange indeed if they should fail to do so. Nor is this all. Fear has been enlisted on the side of error, and in aid of prejudice ; fear, at once the offspring and the parent of ignorance and imbecility of mind. Men have been taught to believe that it is unsafe to trust their own reason and judgment ; that it is hazardous to inquire into the grounds of their faith ; and fatal to relinquish certain articles of the popular creed. It is time men were disabused of this delusion, which, if universal, would endue error, once prevalent, with immortality. Let men once be convinced that they may examine the claims of Unitarianism without danger to their virtue, their peace, or their hopes, and they will not, we are persuaded, be long in embracing it. We hope we shall be able to show them, in the course of the following remarks, that they may do this ; and that in so doing, they will only follow the guidance of nature, reason, and common sense. We shall be satisfied if our remarks prove not altogether unavailing to weaken the hold of prejudice ; to unbind the spell of systematic error ; to disenchant and set free the enthralled reason ; and thus to enable men fairly and justly to estimate the testimony of divine revelation.

It may be proper to state that, by the terms, 'Orthodoxy, Popular Creed,' &c, we mean the system of Calvinism : and that our remarks are intended to apply to

the various denominations of the day, only in proportion as they agree with this system. Of this system we shall speak freely and without disguise. We trust we may do this without offence ; for we speak of the *system only*. With this we have no measures to keep. We regard it as being, in its essential principles and tendency, opposite to the true spirit of the gospel. And we believe, that if the influence of its peculiar doctrines by themselves, should be fully imbibed, and permitted to operate uncontrolled, it would turn the fruits of the gospel into wormwood. Happily, this is not the case. No system of faith, in ordinary circumstances, exerts other than a modified influence on its votaries ; an influence checked and controlled by innumerable causes. In the present case, the doctrines of Calvinism are combined with the great system of moral and spiritual truths, common to all forms of Christianity. It is to these it owes the good which subsists — and subsists so largely too, in many cases — under its sway. Its mischiefs only are its own. Many minds, by a happy moral idiosyncrasy, spontaneously reject the poisonous properties of their faith, and imbibe and assimilate only the kindly influences of principles, associated with it. In others, they subsist as barren speculations, hardly exerting any influence on character or practice. Hence the instances — and they are many — of eminent virtue and piety to be found among Christians of this denomination, and which we value not the less, because united with opinions which we think both false and pernicious. Their piety and virtue spring from the soil of our common Christianity. They have grown up in spite of their peculiar system ; and would, we doubt not, wear a fresher

bloom, and bring forth richer fruits, if these peculiarities were done away.

Is it necessary to say more ? Men of liberal minds will readily believe, that, in condemning a system of doctrines, we cannot intend to impeach the characters, or wound the feelings of those who embrace it. Those of a different temper would neither be soothed by concessions, nor satisfied by disclaimers.

One word with regard to the manner in which religious controversy ought to be conducted. Its single object should be, to elicit and establish truth. Keeping this object steadily in view, we think it best, like the Apostle, to use ' great plainness of speech.' We would call things at once by their right names. We would express our honest convictions, and assert our christian rights fully and fearlessly. Some advocates of Unitarianism seem to us to have adopted a style of defence somewhat too *deprecatory*. We have sometimes thought that they seemed to be oppressed by the consciousness of being in the minority. We cannot sympathise with such a feeling. Were we compelled to regard ourselves as standing alone — single in the midst of the earth, we should regret the circumstance principally on the account of others. We should not feel the less satisfied with our system, or the less confident of its ultimate triumph. We meet our opponents on the broad level of our inherent rights, as men, and as Christians ; rights which they have not given, nor can take away. What is it to us, if in a spirit of petulant and overweening vanity, they choose to deny our title to the christian name ? Their folly and arrogance is their own affair, not ours.

The first presumption we shall consider in favor of

Unitarianism is, that it harmonizes with the voice of external nature. Its doctrines coincide with the conclusions, to which an intelligent and impartial observer of the works of God would naturally come concerning the Divine character. It is certain that nature and revelation, receiving as they have done their impress from the same spirit, cannot speak a different language, though we, indeed, may err in our interpretation both of the one and the other. To him who hath ears to hear, there is an intelligible language uttered forth by the heavens and the earth. To him, who hath eyes to see, the universe is the book of God, inscribed all over with the living lineaments of his perfections ; though its still small voice is often unheard — its magnificent symbols ill understood. It is certain, however, that the universe teaches nothing of a divided, or compound existence in its great first cause. Everything points distinctly to a single designing intelligence, and directing will ; and this the more clearly in proportion to the accuracy and extent of our investigations. If there be any one doctrine, which nature and reason demonstrate more clearly than all others ; any doctrine which must be true, or doubt and scepticism hold universal reign, and men have no longer a foundation for either faith or reasoning ; it is this of the simple unity of God. Whether we reason from cause to effect, or from effect to cause ; commence the argument wherever we may, this is its inevitable result. It speaks out to us from the still depths of our own reflections — it is pencilled with sun-beams on the pages of God's works. Certainly, then, we may be justified in saying, that revelation *cannot* contain a doctrine really inconsistent with this fundamental truth.

Thus far our opponents will go with us ; but they will not admit that the doctrine of the Trinity is, in reality, inconsistent with this. Of this hereafter. They will hardly deny, however, that there is — at first view, at least — an *apparent* inconsistency between them. Now, just so far as this appearance goes, it brings the doctrine within the scope of our remarks, and constitutes a presumption against it. Anything like this doctrine under any modification which has ever been given to it, would not and ought not to be *expected* in divine revelation, by the student of nature. It could not but strike him as a difficulty, an incumbrance, an obstacle in his way altogether unlooked for ; an inconsistency which would shock and embarrass him. We say not that it is such an inconsistency as cannot be reconciled — such a difficulty as cannot be explained away. But we do say that any dogma concerning the divine nature even apparently incompatible with the idea of his simple and absolute unity, is such a one as we ought not to expect to find in the gospel ; and, therefore, if it be really found there, requires to be proved by testimony of the clearest and most decisive character. It must not be left to be made out by remote and laborious inferences, however ingenious ; for the inherent and previous probabilities against it are too strong to be set aside by evidence of this nature. There must be nothing equivocal or obscure in the propositions which declare it ; nothing ambiguous in the medium through which it is conveyed. It must bear on its front the legible impress, ‘ Thus saith the Lord,’ or a reasonable man cannot be expected to believe it. Do we require too much ? We certainly think we do not. We certainly think we do

not overstate the presumption, which reason and nature afford against the truth of this doctrine. We think our opponents must be compelled to meet us on the ground we have marked out.

Another presumption in favor of Unitarianism is, that its representations of the moral character of God accord with the dictates of nature and reason. To an attentive and impartial observer of the works of God, the proofs of his goodness are clear and convincing. The evidence of intelligence and design, is not more manifest than that this design is benevolent. On a superficial view, indeed, we meet with facts that may seem inconsistent with this position, and with principles of an apparently opposite tendency. But as we proceed in our inquiries, new light breaks in upon us at every step. Our difficulties are found to have been the difficulties of ignorance alone. The obscure, and as we thought it, adverse fact, is seen to be an important link in the bright chain of order and beauty that binds the universe. Indeed, the more thoroughly we examine the laws of the material creation, and trace the operations of providence, the deeper and surer must our conviction be, that the whole plan and purpose of the Divinity is essentially benignant — that he has not given existence to the minutest particle of organized matter, but in order to render it conducive to the happiness of something that is capable of enjoyment.

To the same conclusion our abstract reasoning in regard to the divine nature would conduct us. If there be a first cause of all things, he must be infinite, independent, uncontrollable. No other being can possibly interfere with his purposes, or affect his felicity. And in

such a being we cannot even conceive of any other motive or action, than the desire of communicating happiness. So far as the deductions of our own reason are to be trusted — we are safe in averring, that a being of infinite power must likewise be infinitely good. Malignity of purpose, injustice, cruelty, and revenge, necessarily imply a consciousness of weakness. He who can do everything, can have no inducement to do wrong ; can be under no necessity, as dependent beings often are, of passing by the best, in order to fix on the practicable. Reason, then, assures us that God must be good ; and everything we see in the heavens, and on the earth, proclaims that he is so.

Let it be remembered, too, that when we speak of the goodness of God, we do not mean some ill defined, mutable quality, to be explained according to the exigencies of the argument, and capable of being moulded to suit the demands of a theory, which teaches the very opposite. We mean precisely the same quality in kind, though not in degree, as when we speak of human goodness. Doubtless our Creator intended we should form some idea of his moral perfections. But this were impossible, unless the terms which express them are to be understood in the same sense as when applied to the moral qualities of man.

We say, then, that reason and nature teach us, that God is good, in the obvious and popular sense of the term ; good in such a sense that he cannot perform an action, the final purpose of which is the infliction of suffering ; good in such a sense that he cannot do that which, on a full view of the case, would, in a human agent, be denominated cruel or unjust ; good in such a

sense, that he will not punish an innocent being for the crimes which another has committed ; good, in fine, in such a sense, that he cannot punish a frail creature, for not performing what the very law of his being had disqualified him to perform. Suppose we admit, that these views *may* be, in some measure, incorrect ; that a stronger and a brighter light shed from heaven on the mental eye may enable us to see further into the deep mysteries of the Divine character ; and that these dictates of reason may be set aside by the decisions of superior authority. Let us suppose that such evidence *may* be presented in the gospel as shall constrain us to admit, that the goodness of God is something diverse, in kind as well as degree, from the same quality in man ; and that he may, without impeachment of his character, perform what to us seems palpable cruelty and injustice. But is this *probable* ? Is there not a strong presumption beforehand that no doctrines inconsistent with this view of the divine goodness will be found there ? Ought we to anticipate a revelation from heaven, which should unteach us all we had learned in the school of nature ; unsettle the fixed principles of the intellect ; falsify all the conclusions of reason, our primary guide amid the dark and intricate windings of our earthly course, and thus extinguish the light which God himself had enkindled in our minds ? Yet such, if the views of our opponents be correct, is the character and tendency of the revelation God has sent us by his Son. We cannot, possibly, regard it in any other light. It teaches, according to them, that the goodness of God is partial, limited to a small number, who have been selected by an arbitrary decree, to be the depositaries of his favor, while the

rest have been left to inevitable ruin, under the withering curse of his almighty wrath. It teaches that the mass of mankind have been brought into being for no other purpose than to be the victims of remediless ruin, the objects of vindictive and everlasting punishment. It teaches, consistently with this purpose, that men come from their Creator's hands with characters totally depraved ; without the power to form one good desire, or cherish one virtuous sentiment ; as wholly unable to obey the commands of God — (call this imbecility physical or moral, or by whatever name we may, it alters not the fact) — as to pluck the sun from his sphere ; and yet liable for every the smallest transgression to an infinite punishment. And above all it teaches, that such as escape this fearful condemnation are indebted, not to the native goodness — the spontaneous compassion of their Maker, and Judge, but to a full and entire satisfaction made to his justice, all stern and inflexible as they represent it, by another, on whom the penalty of their sins has been rigorously inflicted. Now, it does appear to us, that, if this system of doctrines be true, all our notions of the goodness and paternal kindness of God, gathered from nature, reason, and the spontaneous dictates of our own feelings, must be false. We see not how they can be reconciled. If this system be true, it seems to us little better than mockery, to expatiate to the sinner on the compassion of the divine mind ; or to endeavor to excite him to penitence by the hope of forgiveness. We see not that there is any place for forgiveness in the whole scheme of God's dispensations. It appears to us, that not a single sin ever has been, or ever can be par-

doned ; that repentance and contrition can avail nothing. If this system be correct, it is impossible to regard our world in the same light as before. Under its influence a dark shade overspreads the universe ; and the broad and fair aspect of God's works, glowing with light, and beauty, and joy, we must have to consider an illusion. The earth is transformed into a prison-house, where vengeance trains its victims for immolation ; and all the grander and more striking movements of the material elements become the agents of avenging justice. Storms and tempests, lightning and earthquakes, are to be regarded as scourges of God, and tokens of his indignation. Now, a sound philosophy certainly teaches no such doctrine. It sees in these terrible agencies of nature, as in the sunshine, and the shower, the operations of universal beneficence. It regards the immediate evils they produce as remedial only, and essentially conducive to ultimate good. And we certainly think that a strong presumption in favor of our views of the gospel, arises from the harmony that exists between them and these conclusions of reason — these, we had almost said, *instinctive* apprehensions of divine goodness—these dictates of enlightened philosophy. In the system of our opponents, on the other hand, we think we discern many lingering traces of the false philosophy and gloomy superstition of heathen times, when the imagination wandered in the dark, haunted by terrors of its own creation. Be this as it may, it will hardly be denied that there is a repugnancy between these peculiar dogmas of the popular creed, and the plain suggestions of reason and common sense. Let us admit, that it does not, however, follow, that these dogmas must *necessarily*

be false. Let us admit that all improbable, as we conceive they are ; shocking as they are to every feeling of our hearts ; contradicted, as we think, by the experience of every day in the business and intercourse of life ; still they *may* be true ; that our previous reasonings, sound as they certainly appear to us, may be set aside ; our apprehensions of God's character, simple and natural as we consider them, *may* require to be rectified. Let us suppose we may have pushed our conclusions too far ; that our inferences may have been too hasty, or too broad ; that the light of our own minds, clear as it seems to us, may have misled us. But, surely, we have a right to expect that all these strong probabilities in our favor should be *clearly* and *explicitly* shown to be fallacious. We have a right to require, that the antagonist doctrines be stated, in the revelation which we admit to be from God, in plain, unequivocal terms ; terms of no ambiguous import ; terms which cannot possibly admit of a fair, plausible, or adequate interpretation on any other supposition than that of the truth of the doctrines in question. We aver that as long as there is room for reasonable doubt, with regard to the import of scripture on these points, they are not to be admitted. The proof must be such as to be absolutely irresistible to every unprejudiced mind. There must not be left a loop on which to hang a doubt. On these terms we are willing to join issue with our opponents. Let them show us that all, or any, of the popular dogmas, mentioned above, or any others peculiar to their system, is supported by such evidence as we have required, and which we are quite sure we have a right to demand, and we will embrace it with all its consequences. If we

are unable, as we think we must be, to reconcile it with our general views of God, and nature, we will still believe that, though apparently, they are not in reality inconsistent; and we will endeavor humbly to wait God's own time to illuminate what is dark.

The sum of the argument is this. Nature and reason, experience and observation, we maintain, conspire in inculcating the great truth that God is good, essentially and invariably good; that goodness alone is the prime motive of all his actions, the leading and predominant quality, so to speak, in his character. So that his sovereignty and justice, in all their displays, and operations, are to be interpreted, always, in accordance with this; to be regarded as subservient to its purposes; as existing and exercised only to promote its designs. We are quite sure that, so far as the light of nature and reason goes, these are the views it presents. Now, it appears to us, that with these views the system of our opponents is altogether incompatible. That there is an *apparent* inconsistency, we suppose will not be disputed. But between these views and our own system of religious doctrine there is no repugnancy; they are perfectly accordant. This, then, we say, furnishes a strong presumption in favor of our system, and against theirs. This apparent inconsistency *may* be cleared up, and reconciled, though we see not how; but as long as it remains, the presumption we speak of, will press with all its weight on our opponents. With this presumption against them, these doctrines ought not to be admitted unless they are *incontrovertibly* proved to be true by the supreme authority of God's word. It will not be enough to show that certain passages of scripture *seem* to teach

them. It will not be enough to show that certain passages of scripture seem hardly capable of any other interpretation. It will not be enough to show that some passages, if they mean not this, must to us mean absolutely nothing. It will not be enough even to show that these doctrines are consistent with the general tenor of the gospel. Our opponents must do more than this; they must show, not that these doctrines may be true consistently with the analogy of faith, but that they absolutely *must* be true; not that the gospel may be interpreted consistently with their admission, but that it *can* be interpreted no otherwise. Let them show us all this — and when we see that these doctrines make a necessary part of the christian scheme; that they are so wrought into the very texture of the gospel, that they must be received, or the gospel itself be rejected; we shall readily embrace them. In the mean time, we say, that he who embraces them, on proofs less cogent than we have stated, does it at his own peril — at his own *peril*; for, if false, they must needs be injurious. Whether fatally so, it is not for us to determine.

Another probability in favor of our system, and against that of our opponents, arises, as we think, from the different views they present of the nature and condition of man. This has been touched upon already, but requires to be more fully developed.

In the absence of express testimony from God, we can gather his purposes with regard to man, the end and object of his creation, only from *appearances* — from an attentive consideration of his powers and capacities,

his propensities, habititudes, and affections ; and the adaptation of all these to the circumstances and condition in which he is placed. Now, these appearances, we contend, all lead to the conclusion, that the present world is a place of trial — an initiatory state of existence — a nursery where the human being is to be reared and trained for heaven ; and that such was its destination in the original purpose of the divine mind. For such a state man, as it seems to us, is adapted — wisely, exactly, beautifully adapted. There is a perfect correspondence and congruity between his nature and condition ; between his faculties and the business assigned him ; between his constitution and the circumstances in which he is placed. Probation necessarily implies imperfection — not superinduced, but original. It implies liability to fail ; and wilful failure necessarily involves guilt. In a being, whose character is to be formed by discipline, sin may be said to be a *necessary contingency*. There can be no virtue without it. In this view, ‘God,’ in the language of Solomon, ‘hath made man *right*.’ He is neither more inclined to virtue, nor to vice, than he ought to be.

With these views of the nature and condition of man, Unitarianism perfectly harmonizes. We contend that such are the views directly presented, or implied, and assumed as correct, throughout the gospel. We do not, indeed, regard him as possessed of the capacity, knowledge and virtue of an angel. If he were so, he would be an anomaly among the works of God ; a being wholly out of his sphere. Such endowments would unfit him for his present state ; they would be inconsistent with the very purposes of his existence here. We regard

him as a frail and erring creature, with appetites that require to be restrained, and passions easily roused to violence and misrule. Yet neither his appetites, nor his passions are originally wrong. On the contrary, there is not one of them, which speaks not of a wise and benevolent design. They were intended to be the ministers of happiness and virtue. Capable of perversion they doubtless are ; and when made the ministers of vice and misery, we feel and know, that they are perverted ; and that their original purpose is contravened. But, while we admit that man is frail, and easily biased from the course of virtue, we maintain, that he has within him a capacity for high and holy things ; that he bears upon him still the living impress of the divinity ; that he often feels and manifests the kindling aspirations and soarings of a heaven-born spirit — and we aver that on this basis rests the whole moral machinery of the gospel.

The system of our opponents with regard to the original constitution of man, his present condition, and that of the world he inhabits, is at variance with ours in every respect. According to them, he was originally formed with a perfect character, holy and fair in the moral image of his Creator ; and placed in a world fair and perfect as himself. From this state of things, disease, decay and dissolution were of course excluded. Everything that lived was clothed with immortality. But sin found its way into this fair scene, and its beauty passed away like a dream. The constitution at once of man, and of the world around him, underwent a radical change. Death, inflicted on man as the punishment of his transgression, spread its ravages, we are not informed why,

over the whole unoffending creation. The moral powers of man were totally perverted ; his very reason deserted its post, and went over to the side of his corrupt passions, and the thoughts and purposes of his heart became evil, wholly evil, and that continually ; and the whole race, from that day to this, have inherited this radical and entire depravity ; this inability to think a good thought, or form a virtuous wish ; this total alienation from God, and hatred and opposition to his character. According to them, this world and all that it inherits, is a blot on the fair page of God's works ; an utter perversion of his original design. Man, seen in the light of this system, assumes the aspect of an incarnate demon — utterly hateful and abominable, without one redeeming trait in his character — the scorn, the outcast, and the opprobrium of the universe. For such a being the calvinistic scheme is, for aught we know, good enough. It may be the only one fit for him. For why urge moral motives to a being whose moral powers are extinct ? For ourselves, we should as soon think of preaching to the occupants of the church-yard, as to those of the church — we should as soon think of going on a mission to tigers and hyænas, as to men, if this doctrine were correct. But is it correct ? Are these representations of our common nature agreeable to the dictates of reason and experience ; of common sense and common feeling ? Does any man of common honesty, be his theory what it may, practise on the belief of their correctness in the intercourse of life ? Is he not compelled to assume their falsehood at every step ? Can any parent that has a human heart, look on the infant that smiles in his face, and really believe that it is a fit object of divine indignation, and liable to everlasting

punishment ? We appeal to every man of sensibility who has been led to adopt these views of human nature, whether he has not, at times, been sensible of this strong repugnancy between his theory and all the better feelings of his heart ? We are much mistaken if we have not witnessed the operations of this struggle in many ; and we have wondered that it did not occur to them, that, very possibly, the language of nature might be true, and that of their creed false. To us there is a voice speaking out from the whole analogy of nature, and the workings of every unprejudiced mind, that proclaims the doctrine a libel at once upon man and his Maker. There is no occasion, let it be added, to resort to this theory in order to account for the prevalence of crime and misery in the world, color the portrait of society as darkly as they may ; and we think they are apt for obvious reasons, greatly to overcharge the picture. Our own system furnishes an adequate solution. But, if this doctrine be true, we see not how they can account fairly for the existence of a single virtue or good quality, on earth. We say, in fine, that the presumption against this doctrine, arising from all these considerations, appears to us to be *infinite*. We can hardly express it too strongly. Taking these impressions with him to the perusal of the scriptures, who, we ask, would find this doctrine satisfactorily taught there ?

Again ; we think it an advantage in our system, and affording a probability in its favor, that there is nothing *exclusive* in its spirit ; that it permits and requires us to exercise charity towards Christians of every name ; to regard all as brethren who bear the name of Christ, however widely their speculations may differ from ours.

We hold the right of opinion to be sacred, beyond the control or cognizance of mortals ; an affair between the individual and his God. He alone knows how much of speculative truth is essential to a holy life ; and how far error is consistent with safety. And to him we leave it ; we dare not undertake to exercise his prerogative. In forming our estimate of the characters of men, we look to their conduct, not to their creeds. We are willing to recognise as Christians all who call themselves by this name ; we reject none who do not themselves reject the gospel. Their sincerity, their correctness, is their own affair ; we have nothing to do with it. This, we think, is the true protestant ground. Let us not, however, be misunderstood, or misrepresented, as we fear we have often been. It has been made a topic of reproach against Unitarianism, that it is a cold and uninteresting system ; that it renders its votaries indifferent alike to truth and error. The reproach is altogether unmerited. We are *not* indifferent to the truth. There is nothing in our system that tends to such a result. We believe that all truth is valuable, and all error injurious, just so far, and no farther than they affect the character, and influence the practice, of their respective votaries. Truth we regard only as the handmaid of virtue ; her light we value only in so far as it illuminates the path of christian duty. Doubtless, we admit that he is more likely to arrive speedily and securely at the goal, who pursues the straight course, than he who wanders from it. In one word, we regard opinions as valuable or otherwise, in proportion to their practical tendency, rather than to their speculative correctness. Our opponents, on the contrary, seem to us

to attribute a mysterious and magical effect to the reception of certain abstract doctrines. They perpetually inculcate this as a necessary condition of salvation. They make it, with perfect consistency, a test of the christian character — of the spiritual state of men ; and refuse to regard as brethren, or admit to their fellowship, those who cannot abide this test. It is the very spirit, and letter too, of their system, that their peculiar views of revelation are fundamentally important ; that they are absolutely essential to the formation of a holy character. These peculiar views, then, must be embraced by all who hope to come within the pale of their communion. No rectitude of life, no meekness and gentleness of temper, no apparent piety and devotion, can compensate for a failure here. No matter how pure or lofty the character of the individual. If his creed be deficient in the canonical number of propositions, no other proof is requisite to justify them in marking him with the stamp of reprobation. We are not speaking of the temper or conduct of individuals among the Orthodox, more, or fewer in number. Our objection goes deeper — it lies against the very spirit of their scheme. We object against it that it is of its very essence to inculcate a habit of mind at once exclusive and arrogant. The votaries of this system, if they act consistently, must exclude from their charity all those who differ from them in their peculiar belief. The more conscientious, the more bigoted. The more they think they love God, the less will they love their fellow-men. Their system *teaches* them to regard those, who reject it, as the enemies of God : and why, or how, should they love those whom God abhors ?


Who will say that there is nothing unkindly in the tendency of such a system as this ? Who will say there is nothing to shock the better feelings of our nature ? Who will say that there is nothing apparently incompatible with the spirit and purpose of that religion which was announced by the proclamation of ' peace on earth, and good will to man ?'

We consider it, therefore, we repeat, as a strong presumption in favor of Unitarianism, that it is chargeable with no such pernicious tendencies. It does not teach us to consider any peculiar set of opinions as absolutely essential to entitle us to the favor of our Maker and Judge ; and yet, within these limits, it leaves us ample scope for a rational and pious preference of our own views. And we *do* prefer them. We think them immeasurably superior to those of our opponents. We are undoubtingly assured that they are more kindly in their operation on the human character ; that they cherish more generous feelings ; that they raise to a higher importance in the scale both of duty and of happiness, the charities and courtesies of domestic and social life ; and that they are less likely to give birth to sanctimonious selfishness, and spiritual pride. We believe that in proportion as we have imbibed the spirit of our system, we are happier than the disciples of the vulgar faith ; and we think these considerations justify us in feeling a warm interest in the prevalence of this system. They justify, too, our efforts to extend its triumphs, so far as these efforts are not inconsistent with the rights and feelings of others. But beyond this limit they will not justify us in going. If we transcend this, it is the fault of our temper, not of our opinions. These will not

justify us in regarding our neighbors, because they believe more or less than ourselves, with scorn and aversion, as reprobates, and outcasts from the favor of heaven. They will not justify us in outraging their feelings, and invading their rights by denunciations and anathemas ; in impairing their usefulness, and blasting their fair prospects, by directing upon them ' the evil eye ' of public mistrust and suspicion. They will not justify us in intruding upon the sanctity of the domestic hearth, and sowing discord among the charities of home, by alarming the fears of the young, the ignorant, and the timid ; in usurping a fraudulent control over their inexperienced minds, and thus withdrawing their confidence from their natural guides and guardians. These things, our sense of the value of our religious opinions will not warrant us in doing. On the contrary, we declare, for ourselves, that rather than secure their prevalence by such means, we would willingly see the last vestige of them disappear from the face of the earth. Our opponents may denominate this indifference if they please. To us it appears equally the dictate of natural justice, and christian forbearance ; one of the fairest traits in our system, and among the strongest presumptions in its favor.

Again, we regard it as a presumption in favor of Unitarianism, that it permits, and inculcates the exercise of our reasoning powers on a subject of all others the most worthy to employ them. It addresses itself to our reason ; it appeals continually to its decisions ; and it regards these decisions, when formed on proper evidence, as final and conclusive. Whatever doctrines reason, ' in

the sober use of its legitimate, peculiar powers,' will not approve, we unhesitatingly reject. They can make no part of our creed. To a blind, implicit faith, we assign no value whatever. It is well if it be not positively pernicious. We fully believe that our views in this respect, coincide with those of the gospel. We are sure they have a strong probability, *a priori* in their favor. We do not find that God has ever enjoined on men the duty of believing without evidence. We do not find that he has ever addressed them otherwise than as rational beings, capable of discerning between truth and falsehood, and expected to do so on their own responsibility. 'We speak,' says St Paul, 'as to discreet men; judge ye what we say.' Revelation, as we think, came not to supersede reason in its office, or to set aside its deductions; but to enlighten its course, to expand its views, to enlarge its field of action, to dispel the earth-born mists that obscured its vision, to give it broader and more solid premises, on which to build its conclusions, and to imp its wings for a higher flight. It never calls for the subjection of reason — the 'prostration' of the understanding, to its dictates. On the contrary, it is itself subjected to the decision of reason; and must abide the test. It must be received or rejected according to the dictates of our sober judgment on the evidence presented. And as with the evidence on which it rests, so with the doctrines it contains. These too, are subjected to the test of reason. We believe them just in so far as we understand them; and no farther. The provinces of faith and reason are not distinct, the one beginning where the other ends. They cover the same ground. And we see not how it is possible it should be



otherwise. It seems to us a mere identical proposition to state that what is not understood, cannot be believed. In this case no object is presented to the mind for it to receive or reject. What is not understood is to me no revelation. If a man say that he believes what he does not pretend either to explain or comprehend, he deceives himself. His faith is merely verbal and illusory. Doubtless there may be many truths both in nature and in scripture, of which we are ignorant. But to us, so long as we remain ignorant of them, they are nothing—they are to us as though they did not exist. We pretend not to comprehend the nature and perfections of the Divine Being, for example; but in so far as they are displayed, they are perfectly plain and intelligible—‘he that runs may read them.’ And what is not displayed is no concern of ours. My eye cannot penetrate the deep infinitude of the space that surrounds me; but within the verge of my own horizon I can see clearly, and move freely: with what is beyond I have at present no concern. Let it not be said that we exalt reason at the expense of revelation. We do but assign to each its appropriate sphere. Reason, we admit, was weak and inefficient by itself. And why? It wanted authority to still the clamor of the passions, that disturbed its operations. It wanted facts to render its conclusions certain. Above all, it wanted sanctions to bind them on the conscience. All this revelation has supplied; and thus completed the system of God’s dispensations to man. Do we depreciate its value? Is there anything in this representation of a tendency to lower our sense of gratitude to God ‘for his unspeakable gift?’ On the contrary, we value it the more highly because it is, as

we think, adapted to the high origin, and immortal destination of our common nature. And we think that our opponents, in vilifying and degrading human reason; in representing it as corrupt, and debased; and cautioning men continually against trusting to its guidance, in making it the test of a docile and humble spirit, to be willing to embrace doctrines, from which reason recoils; do justice neither to reason, nor to scripture; neither to man, nor his Maker. We think too, they betray the weakness of their own cause; that they disparage reason because its decisions are not in their favor; and thus create a strong presumption against the correctness of their views in the mind of every unprejudiced inquirer. These views, surely, are such as no reasonable man would expect beforehand to meet with in a revelation from that being, who kindled the light of intelligence in the human mind. They are not, therefore, to be admitted upon slight evidence. Probability is against them. They may not be assumed — taken, as it were for granted — drawn in by remote and subtle implication, provided there be nothing clearly and explicitly disapproving them. The true state of the question is far otherwise. Unitarianism, in this point, as in others, builds on the common sense and common apprehensions of mankind; it appeals to experience. In its estimate of the powers and duties of human reason it falls in with the concurrent judgment of all men of all ages, in regard to every other subject. If then, religion alone is to be an exception; if here alone men are to desert the universal guide; if on this subject alone propositions are to be believed — not understood, — and faith is to be accounted valuable in proportion as it triumphs over reason;

certainly it is incumbent on our opponents clearly to make out their case. We have a right to expect that they give us plenary proofs, and incontrovertible authority. If there be this strange repugnancy between natural reason and the truth of God, it is their business to make it appear. We maintain that they are perfectly accordant. It is for them to show that they are not so.

We shall mention at present but one presumption more in favor of our system. It is that which arises from the simplicity of the faith which it requires as essential to the christian character. The gospel was designed for universal reception. It is designated by our Saviour himself as 'glad tidings to the poor.' It is addressed to the unlearned, to men pressed by the labors, and distracted by the cares of a busy and toilsome life; who have neither leisure nor ability for mental cultivation, nor capacity to comprehend the deep abstractions, and remote and subtle conclusions of metaphysical reasoning. Now, so far as faith is essential to the salvation of persons of this character, what ought we to expect would be the subjects of his faith? What kind of propositions would be likely to compose the fundamentals of their creed? Would it be agreeable to our natural notions of the wisdom and goodness of God, that he should suspend the eternal felicity of beings such as these, on their belief of dogmas, which the subtlest disputants have never been able satisfactorily to solve? Would the benevolent Parent of all deal thus with his children?

We appeal to any candid and unprejudiced mind, whether the presumption be not altogether against such a course? and whether the doctrines essential to the

salvation of the mass of mankind ought not to be expected to be few, simple, and easy to be understood? To us it appears that the great fundamental doctrines of any religious system must be plain, or they cannot be true. In a system of faith designed for all, and made necessary to salvation, simplicity seems to us an *essential* quality. Any complicated and abstruse doctrines *cannot* make a part of it. Let us apply these remarks to the state of the case between us and our opponents.

Unitarianism teaches, that, for those who rest their hopes on Christianity, there is one fundamental doctrine, and one only. The essentials of our creed may be stated in three words: 'Jesus is the Christ; a messenger of truth and mercy from God.' This simple proposition admitted, with unwavering assent into the mind, the whole business of *christian* faith, merely and distinctively, is discharged. If this single doctrine will not enlighten the conscience, and purify the heart, and regulate the life; if it will not tranquillize the spirit, and enkindle devotion, and awaken hope, and wing the aspirations of the soul to God; if it will not communicate strength to suffer, and a will to serve, then nothing will. We cannot believe, that by making our faith more complex we should increase its practical power, even in minds capable of wider and more elaborate views. The more simple, as it appears to us, the more efficacious. And in minds of a simpler cast, we should weaken, if not destroy its force. Faith must be an active principle, or it can be of no avail; and a principle can be active in so far only as it is clearly apprehended, and cordially embraced. Abstruse and multifarious propositions may gain a *formal* assent from those, who are taught to con-

sider such assent as necessary to their eternal welfare; but it is obvious that this assent, in most cases, is merely verbal; that it has no firm hold on the intellect; and that there is great danger that it will accustom its subjects to substitute the hallucinations of the fancy for the sober dictates of the understanding. It is the excellence of our creed, that it is plain, and easy of apprehension; capable of satisfactory proof alike to the humblest and most cultivated minds; and that it contains within it the living principle and germ of the whole system of practical Christianity. Whoever admits this, is bound, by an authority, which he cannot think of questioning, to the performance of all the moral duties, and the cultivation of all the holy affections of the gospel.

Our opponents, on the other hand, present us with a string of propositions, drawn out with logical formality, and embracing doctrines, which, if true, are confessedly anything but plain. We have already stated the *improbability* of these doctrines in general. We now add, that admitting them to be true, it is extremely improbable that they should be essential to salvation. They are too recondite in their character, too far beyond the grasp of common apprehension; the proofs on which they rest are too metaphysical, they have an air altogether too scholastic, to be the basis of a system, which is to *form* the characters, and regulate the lives, of the weak, the ignorant, and the busy.

To instance in the doctrine of the Trinity alone. It is alleged, that without this, true piety cannot exist, and that those who reject it are unworthy of the christian name. Yet what is this doctrine, when fairly and soberly

examined? What but a tissue of absurdities; of conflicting and incompatible ideas? It states that there are three persons, infinite and equal in power and perfection, yet but one God. Is there anything like this in the gospel? Is it possible to state this proposition, or one equivalent, in the language 'which the holy ghost teacheth?' Yet, if there be such a doctrine, is it not confessedly a doctrine of revelation alone — one of which nature and reason give no intimation? and is it probable that revelation would make fundamental to the hope of man, a doctrine, which cannot even be stated in the language of revelation? a doctrine, which, whenever and wherever it is found, is necessarily announced in 'the words which man's wisdom,' or his folly, 'teacheth' — rough and bristling all over with uncouth terms, drawn from the school and the cloister? But further, we ask, is it possible to state this proposition at all in terms of a definite and settled import, so that the one part shall not be repugnant to the other? Is it possible, we ask seriously, to assign to the doctrine any intelligible meaning whatever, without running into simple Unitarianism on the one hand, or absolute Tritheism on the other? If the term person has any meaning at all, it means a distinct, intelligent agent; and if three distinct, intelligent agents, each with the attribute of infinity, be not three Gods, then language is no longer to be trusted as a vehicle of thought. If the term means something less than this, we ask what that *something* is? He who calls on me to adopt an article of faith, at the fearful stake of my eternal salvation, is bound, in common fairness, to tell me clearly what such article imports. He may not shroud himself in obscure phrases, and talk of mystery,


When I ask for truth. We do not call on our opponents to explain all the bearings and relations of the doctrine; we ask them, simply and solely, to tell us what the doctrine is; what is the purport of the terms in which they have chosen — for revelation has not done it for them — to announce it? This they have not done; and this, we only believe, they cannot do. One of their champions, when hard pushed, takes shelter under the cover of the 'distinctions.' The 'persons' of the godhead are many 'distinctions;' whether distinctions without difference, we are not informed. We can see no advantage in this term, except that it is one step farther advanced in abstractness and obscurity than the other. The other tells us that the three persons are 'three somethings.' Now we ask the advocates of this doctrine to lay their hands on their hearts, and tell us, whether they be not solemn trifling. The hungry soul asks his spiritual guide for bread, and he gives him a — 'something!' The anxious inquirer wishes to ascertain what the conditions on which the benefits of the gospel are to be obtained. He is told that the sole condition is faith. He asks, what are the objects of this saving faith? and is answered, that the prime article is, there are 'three distinctions,' or 'three somewhats,' of the divine nature. No doubt he will be highly satisfied by this disclosure. No doubt this faith must have powerful efficacy to restrain his passions, to exalt and purify his affections, to kindle his devotions, and to enlarge his charity. With good reason may he look down from his eminence on his uninitiated brethren, with pity for their blindness, and thank God that he is not as they are men. But allowing the importance of this doc-

trine, who are they that adequately believe it? and in what does the advantage or sufficiency of this faith consist? Is it in the repetition of a form of words, without regard to the import attached to them? Do they 'hold the faith,' who verge, with Sherlock, on Tritheism — so closely verge, that the wit of man cannot draw the line between them? or they, who fall, with South, in every thing but words, into the doctrine of the simple unity — regarding the persons of the Deity as so many relations only between him and his creature? If our opponents will not grant the sufficiency of a faith *merely verbal*, and yet allow the orthodoxy of the last mentioned class, it will require but a slight extension of their system to admit us also, whose faith is not *substantially* different; whose language is more honest; and who have, at least, the advantage of knowing, and being able to state, precisely what our meaning is.

Our opponents disclaim any construction of this doctrine inconsistent with the unity of God. This disclaimer, we doubt not, is honestly made. But do they not deceive themselves? Do they not practise an illusion on their own minds? We ask them to look into the deep recesses of their hearts, and see whether they do not find there the idea of three distinct objects of worship, covered only with a thin veil of words without any definite meaning. We are persuaded that, if they find not these ideas, they will find nothing definite whatever — that their Trinitarianism will amount to this, if fearlessly examined, or amount to nothing. We say that it is impossible, consistently with the laws that govern the human intellect, that it should be otherwise. The doctrine of the Trinity either teaches the existence of *three*

Gods, or it teaches nothing distinct from Unitarianism. We say not, that it does not employ very different terms from such as we can admit; but we do say that these terms, imposing as they appear, are absolutely without meaning, unless they mean more than those who employ them will admit. It is impossible we aver, for the wit of man to comprehend the distinction between the terms *person* and *being*, as applied to the Deity; or even to conceive, for one moment, that such a distinction *can exist*. The term *person*, therefore, in this connection, consistently with the disclaimer mentioned above, is altogether void of import. It conveys no more idea to the mind than if it were in an unknown tongue. We repeat, therefore, that in so far as any one is a Trinitarian, in any intelligible sense, just so far is he a worshipper of more Gods than one. We speak advisedly, and according to the dictates of our sober judgment, when we say, that between this point and Unitarianism, there is not a foot of ground, on which to stand; not a foot, from which they may not be driven by their own admissions. The doctrine is either false, or nugatory. In the one case, it must be pernicious; in the other, useless, at least. These positions, we are aware, may appear startling to many. It seems to have been generally admitted, by Unitarians, that the doctrine, though admitted not to teach more Gods than one, was still entitled to consideration, still capable of sustaining an argument as to its truth or falsehood. We think this concession unnecessary, or *premature* at least. We think it will be time enough to make it, when the advocates of the doctrine shall have informed us what they mean by it — or when at least, they shall have shown us, that, not mean-

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ing this, it can have any other possible meaning whatever. This they have never done, and, we believe, they never can do it. Our statements will be denied, probably denounced; but they will not be fairly met, and refuted. Let any two of its champions agree in a definition of this doctrine assigning a precise and intelligible meaning to the terms in which it is stated; nay, let any one of them fix on a definition by which he will himself abide, and we will readily retract our error. At least, we shall admit that a tangible topic is presented for discussion, capable of being either proved, or disproved, adopted or rejected. This, we think, is not at present, the true state of the case. We can see nothing in the dogma, short of tritheism, on which either faith can rest, or with which an antagonist can grapple. Be this, however, as it may. It is hardly to our immediate purpose to discuss the truth, or falsehood of this, or the other articles of the popular creed. We wish only to show, at present, that even if true, they are hardly entitled, as our opponents claim for them, to be regarded as essential to the christian character. And this, we think, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, we have satisfactorily established. And, if we mistake not, the same course of reasoning will be found conclusive, so far, at least, as the exigences of our argument require, against the rest. They are not the doctrines which one would expect to find laid down as the necessary basis of a saving faith, and which ought not to be admitted as such without the clearest and most cogent proofs. The simplicity of our creed, on the other hand, we maintain, constitutes a strong probability in its favor. Our limits will not allow us to pursue this course of argument further. Neither,

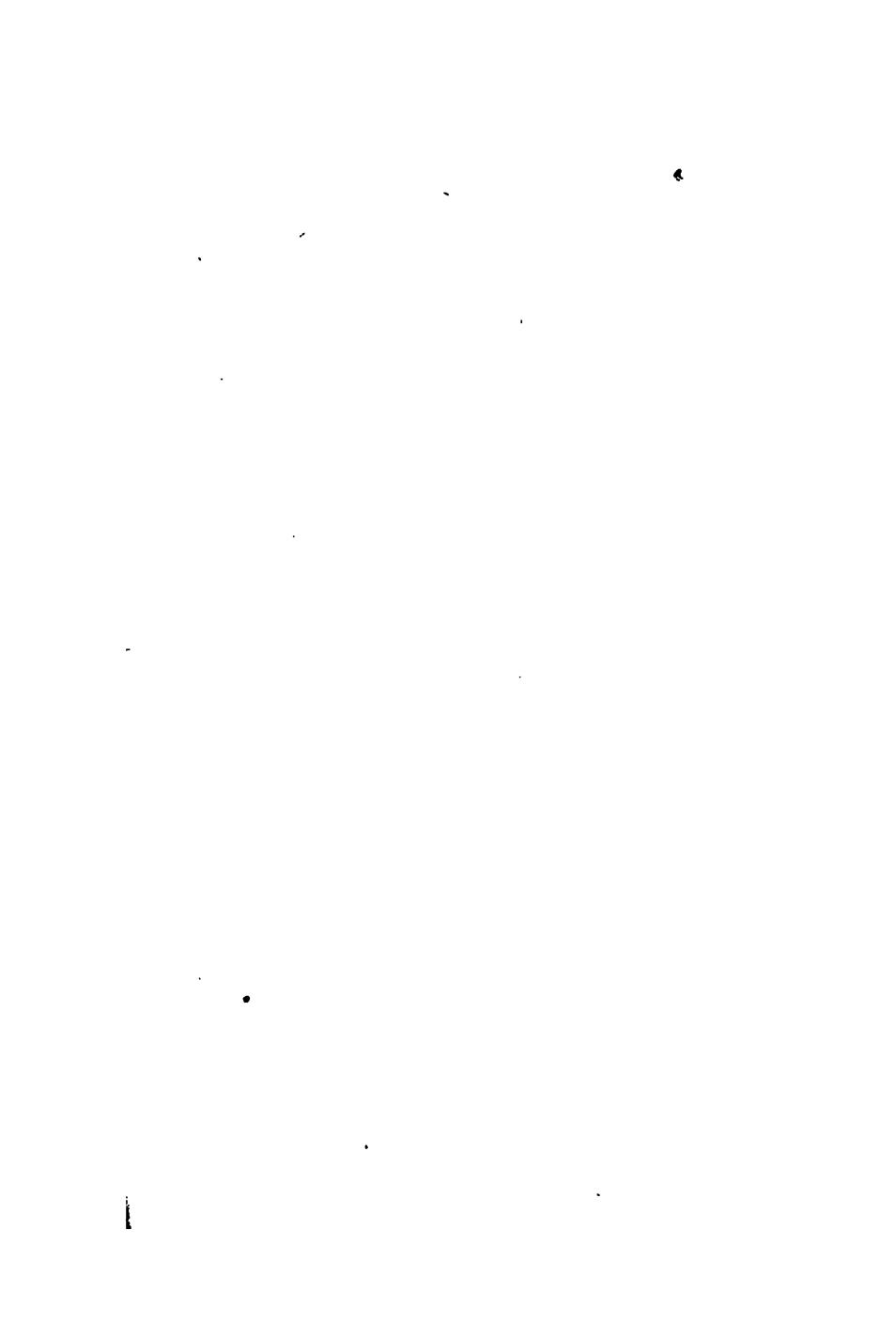
perhaps, is it necessary. If we have been at all successful in communicating our impression, in illustrating our views, we think we have made it appear, at least, that our scheme of doctrine presents itself with fair and plausible pretensions; that it ought not to be rejected without a hearing. We think we have shown, that it has strong probabilities, and weighty presumptions, in its favor; that nature, experience, reason, and providence, and the whole analogy of God's works, plainly point to such a scheme, as what ought to be *expected* in revelation from Heaven; and as what may, therefore, be assumed, taken for granted, to be true, unless distinctly shown to be false. This, we affirm, is the true state of the controversy between us and our opponents. The burden of proof rests wholly on them. We are not called on to show, by critical investigation, and scriptural authority, that our doctrines are correct. This has indeed been done a thousand times twice told; and will still be repeated. But really such a course appears to us gratuitous. Our opponents are bound to prove, and with the clearest evidence, that our doctrines are not true. They are bound to invalidate, by undeniable authority, all the strong probabilities on our side. We are not bound to become the assailants. On the contrary we have possession of the strong hold — we stand on the vantage ground. We have no fears for the result. We have no apprehensions or misgivings in regard to it. We consider its ultimate triumphs as certain. Not that we anticipate the entire eradication of error, the universal reign of truth on earth. They will doubtless continue, in a greater or less degree, to hold a divided empire in the world, while man continues to be man; and

thus to form a part of our mental and moral discipline in this preparatory state. But we do anticipate the general prevalence of more rational views of God and man, and of their mutual relations, than have hitherto obtained. We anticipate this from our confidence in the divine goodness, and in the progressive nature of the human mind. And this anticipation we would not relinquish, even though our eyes, in surveying the moral horizon, could discern no glimmerings of a brighter morning about to dawn upon the world. But it is not so with us. The day star of hope has already arisen. We are cheered by the signs of the times. The spirit of inquiry is abroad — a spirit free and masterless as the mountain breeze. Its course will not be permanently checked. The reign of mysticism, of spiritual usurpation, and dogmatical imposition, is passing away. Men are beginning to think and examine for themselves, and to make religion, both in theory and practice, a matter of personal concern. The present is, to a remarkable degree, an age of bold yet cautious speculation — cautious, because well informed — for rashness is allied to ignorance. It is an age of practical, business-like, common-sense philosophy. There is a tendency in the public mind to bring everything to the test of rigid scrutiny. Whatever principles in science, politics, morals, or religion, will not bear this test, will be sure to be rejected. The man who perceives not this tendency in the public mind of the present age, is blind; and equally blind is he who sees not its inevitable result.

The popular systems, both of government and reli-

gion, are fast becoming obsolete; the world has outgrown them; and they will soon be cast off. Men will have a more rational system, or they will have none. Of the latter, we trust, there is no danger. The present is decidedly, and remarkably, a religious age. We do not believe there has been a time since the introduction of Christianity, when the sense of religious obligation, and the conviction of its essential importance to the well being of man, was so general, and so deep as at present. The reign of scepticism and irreligion has passed away. This spirit has sown its seed, and reaped its harvest — the wind, and the whirlwind. The world is satisfied with the experiment; and will hardly be induced to repeat it. Reason has returned to its natural alliance with piety and devotional feeling; an alliance, which, for the benefit of both parties, we trust will never be dissolved.

On these grounds rests our confidence in the final triumph of rational Christianity. A thick cloud, we are aware, has long rested on the religious world; but we behold the bow of promise spreading its beautiful arch athwart the dark surface, and brightening as it expands. We see the '*lifting*' of the mists, even from those tracts where they have hovered longest and gathered thickest. Bright breezes, we doubt not, will soon spring up, and the dark masses roll away for ever.



1st Series.

No. 80.

TESTIMONIES
FROM
THE NEIGHBORHOOD
OF THE
ETERNAL WORLD,
ON
ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

BY NOAH WORCESTER, D. D.

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THE OCCASION OF THIS TRACT.

THIS Tract was occasioned by the following circumstances. After having spent many months in inquiries relating to the ground of acceptance with God, and the truth of the popular hypothesis that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner's justification, I happened to read a little book, entitled 'Incidents in the Life of President Dwight,' which contained the solemn testimony that I have copied in the following pages. I had previously written a series of about twenty numbers, which I intended to prepare for publication. But the testimony of Dr Dwight, in opposition to my views, seemed to demand my attention; and it was given in a form, which afforded an opportunity for what appeared to me a striking contrast between his testimony and that of the Messiah. By exhibiting the contrast, I thought I should have opportunity to make my own views on the subject intelligible to Christians in general, — and this in a form both concise and perspicuous. I therefore resolved to give a summary view of the different opinions on the subject, in the form of a Tract. Dr Dwight was a man of eminence in public estimation, and he was so in mine. Hence there is the greater obligation to try to correct what was erroneous in his writings; and hence, too, I have been free from all temptation to write a single word reproachful to his character. To correct what was erroneous in his opinions, is not reproaching his character; it is but doing what I would that others should do to me.

The article entitled 'Paul's Ground of Rejoicing,' had been written (excepting the N. B.) prior to my seeing the testimony of Dr Dwight. It may properly be given in connexion with other testimonies from the 'Neighborhood of the Eternal World;' for a great part, if not all I have quoted from his testimony, was written when he was 'such an one as Paul the aged,' and one who lived in expectation soon to finish his course.'

TESTIMONIES

FROM THE

‘NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE ETERNAL WORLD.’

PRESIDENT DWIGHT’S TESTIMONY.

BEFORE his last sickness, President Dwight had a severe attack of disease, which brought him near to the grave. But from this sickness God so far restored him, that he was again able to preach; and he took occasion to preach to his students with direct allusion to his then recent sickness, and the views he entertained in the prospect of speedy dissolution. The following is an extract from his address, at the conclusion of the sermon. Speaking to the scholars of what might be their views and feelings on a death bed, he observed:

‘But no acts of obedience will then appear to you to have merited, in any sense, acceptance with God. In this view, those acts of my life concerning which I had entertained the best hopes, which I was permitted to entertain, those which to me appeared the least exceptionable, were nothing and less than nothing. The mercy of God, as exercised towards our lost race

through the all-sufficient and glorious righteousness of the Redeemer, yielded me the only foundation of hope for good beyond the grave. During the long continuance of my disease, as I was always, except when in paroxysms of suffering, in circumstances entirely fitted for solemn contemplation, I had ample opportunity to survey the most interesting of all subjects on every side. As the result of all my investigations, let me assure you, and that from the neighborhood of the eternal world, *confidence in the righteousness of Christ* is the only foundation furnished, by earth or heaven, upon which, when you are about to leave the world, you can safely or willingly rest the everlasting life of your souls. To trust in anything else, will be to *feed upon the wind, and sup up the east wind.* — ‘Incidents,’ &c, p. 90, 91.

Excepting the testimony of an inspired teacher against my present opinions, nothing perhaps would have been better adapted to shake my confidence in them than such a testimony from Dr Dwight, delivered under such circumstances. There was nothing in the character of the man, known to me, and nothing in the circumstances under which the testimony was delivered, which excites in my mind the least doubt of his sincerity. But one, greater than Dr Dwight, has taught me to ‘call no man master;’ and my heavenly Father has required me to love him with all my own understanding, and not with the understanding of any other man. Besides, observation has convinced me that good men may err, even in the immediate prospect of death and a judgment to come. I am, perhaps, at the present moment, in as near ‘neighborhood of the eternal world’ as President Dwight was, when the

above extract was written and delivered; and with all the care and solemnity which my situation demands, and with cordial respect for the character of Dr Dwight, I shall endeavor to examine his testimony, and compare it with the oracles of God.

The first sentence may be understood in different senses. In one sense it may be correct, in others, erroneous. It is this: 'But no acts of obedience will then appear to you to have merited, in any sense, acceptance with God.'

If the meaning is, that 'no acts of obedience' will appear to have *deserved* the pardon of our sins, and the blessing of eternal life, the sentiment is, in my opinion, perfectly correct. For we are 'saved by grace' — free and unpurchased.

But there are still two other senses in which the words may be understood. They may mean, that no acts of obedience are in themselves worthy of divine acceptance; or they may mean, that no acts of obedience can render the agent worthy of divine approbation, or have anything to do in his justification.

If the first of these be the meaning, the hypothesis is contradicted by a multitude of passages of scripture. Cain was taught by God a different doctrine: 'If thou *doest well* shalt thou not be accepted?' Many passages of scripture tell us distinctly what acts of obedience are acceptable to God, or with which he is well pleased. Besides, is it not reproachful to God to say, that he requires that which is unworthy of his acceptance? I suspect, however, that the latter of the two meanings is the one intended by Dr Dwight.

Here, again, I freely admit, that our obedience to
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the gospel does not render us *deserving* of acceptance, pardon and divine approbation; it is, however, the *condition* on which those favors are promised and bestowed, according to the new covenant,—and it is also an indispensable *qualification* for our receiving them. Though the obedient and reformed sinner may not claim nor expect the promised favors, on the ground that he *deserves* them in *pay* for his obedience, yet he may expect them, and humbly plead for them, as favors which the mercy of God has promised to the obedient.

Another sentence may now be introduced:—‘The mercy of God, as exercised towards our lost race through the all-sufficient and glorious righteousness of the Redeemer, yielded me the only foundation of hope for good beyond the grave.’

I might have written this sentence myself, in accordance with my present views of divine truth; and, if I mistake not, it more correctly expresses my views than it does what I supposed to have been intended by Dr Dwight; for I suppose he meant to express the idea, that the ‘righteousness of Christ’ is the only ground of the sinner’s justification, and consequently the only ground of hope. Instead of this, his language gives us the ‘MERCY of God’—not the ‘righteousness of Christ,’ as the only ‘foundation of hope for good beyond the grave.’ He makes the ‘righteousness of Christ’ the medium ‘through’ which ‘the mercy of God is exercised’ or displayed. This is my own view of the subject; but not the idea which the Doctor meant to express.

The following sentence is, if I mistake not, as great a failure as the preceding, as to clearly expressing the

idea intended,—and a still greater failure as to expressing the truth:—‘As the result of all my investigations, let me assure you, and that from the neighborhood of the eternal world, *confidence in the righteousness of Christ* is the only foundation furnished, by earth or heaven, upon which, when you are about to leave the world, you can safely or willingly rest the everlasting life of your souls.’

The doctrine which the good Doctor meant to teach his pupils, is presumed to be this—that the **RIGHT-EOUSNESS OF CHRIST** is the only foundation on which they could safely rest the everlasting life of their souls. But instead of this, he taught them that ‘**CONFIDENCE** in the righteousness of Christ is the only foundation,’ &c. ‘What two ideas are more distinct than our ‘**CONFIDENCE**’ and the **OBJECT** in which we confide? They are just as distinct as the ‘mercy of God’ and the **MEDIUM** through which it is displayed—or as distinct as the mercy of God and the objects of that mercy.

I wish it to be clearly understood and kept in mind, that, in my opinion, all the favors we receive from God are of free grace. However obedient we may have been, we should ever feel, after all we may have done, that ‘we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.’ We have done nothing which brings God into our debt; but we may have done that which he in mercy has promised to reward with pardon and eternal life. Hence, to speak of our obedience, that obedience which God has required by the gospel, as ‘nothing and less than nothing,’ is, in my view, improper, unwarranted, and of a bad tendency; for it is hardly reasonable to suppose that men

will be very careful to 'do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God,' if they are made to believe that so doing is 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to God's acceptance or approbation. •

I have mentioned my belief that Dr D. failed to express his meaning, when he represented '*confidence in the righteousness of Christ*' as the only foundation for hope to rest upon in regard to everlasting life. Yet I think there is reason to fear that too many persons have no better foundation for their hope than their own confidence that the righteousness of Christ will be set to their account for justification. But it ought to be understood that men may have great confidence in the correctness of an erroneous opinion; and that no confidence or reliance, whatever may be its object, can be of saving advantage, unless it disposes us to a life of humble obedience to God.

I am not ignorant of the fact that there are several passages of scripture which have been supposed to teach, 'that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of a sinner's justification.' I have spent months in a careful examination of the bible, in relation to this subject; but I have not only failed of finding the phrase, *the righteousness of Christ*, in the bible, but I have failed to find one text which even seemed to me to imply the doctrine in question; while, on the other hand, I have found a multitude of texts which not only seem to me to *imply* but to *assert* ideas in direct contradiction to the doctrine. Had the doctrine been true and important, we surely might expect to find it clearly stated, or at least unquestionably implied, in the instructions of our Saviour. But instead of teaching that his right-

eousness is the only ground of justification, and that our obedience is 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to our acceptance with God, he taught his hearers, that their acceptance, their pardon and salvation, depended so entirely on their obedience to his precepts, that if they obeyed, they would be pardoned and saved; and, if not, they must perish. Neither Moses nor any other prophet taught this doctrine with more clearness than it was taught by the Messiah. As in other papers I have brought to view much that was said by other inspired teachers, I shall, in this, confine myself to what was said by the faithful and true witness — and to but a part of what he said on the subject.

Such obedience as Christ has required, as conditions of divine favors, and which, he has assured us, will be rewarded by our heavenly Father, cannot with propriety be spoken of as nothing and less than nothing, as to God's acceptance or approbation. With this remark in view, I will mention some passages in the sermon on the mount.

After pronouncing those 'blessed' who are poor in spirit, and those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemaker, and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; Jesus then added: 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for *great is your reward in heaven.*' Matt. v. 11, 12. Then, in the 44th and 45th verses, he commanded his hearers, 'Love your enemies—that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven.' Can that

be of no value which renders us like God or his children? Is his own image in us 'nothing,' in regard to our acceptance with him?

In the 6th chapter, we have distinct directions how we should not, and how we should, give alms, pray, and fast. In regard to each we are assured, that if we obey his directions, our *heavenly Father will reward us openly*. 'Your heavenly Father will reward you openly,' is thus three times repeated.

Having given a form of prayer, in which there was a petition for forgiveness, after the close of the prayer he enforced the duty of praying for pardon, by saying: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.' Matt. vi. 14, 15.

Who, in view of this passage, will say, that our obedience in forgiving one another is 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to our obtaining the forgiveness of God?

In chapter 7th, we have further instructions as to prayer, encouraged by promises: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' v. 7. Then we are reminded of the kindness of parents in giving good things to their children. Christ then said, 'How much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' vii. 9, 10, 11. Is asking, then, 'nothing' as to our obtaining?

Near the close of the sermon, we read: 'Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of our

Father who is in heaven.' Then Christ closed the sermon by letting us know, that he 'who heareth and *doeth* the sayings,' or precepts, of this sermon, may be likened to a 'wise man who built his house upon a rock;' and that he who heareth them and *doeth* them *not*, is like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. Who then shall dare to say, that *doing* the will of the Father, and obeying the precepts of Christ, are 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to our acceptance and our safety?

Other passages of similar import, from different parts of the gospel, may further show the value and importance of our obedience.

'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' Matt. x. 41, 42.

'And he said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these who hear the word of God and do it. Luke viii. 21 — Matt. xii. 50.

'But love ye your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your *reward* shall be great.' Luke vi. 35.

'But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, and the lame and the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, — for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' Luke xiv. 13, 14.

A woman once said to Jesus, 'Blessed is the womb

that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.' Luke xi. 27, 28.

'Verily, verily I say unto you, if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death.' John viii. 51.

If our obedience insures such favors as these, how is it possible that it should be 'nothing' in respect to God's approbation?

Dr Dwight's testimony had the advantage of being given under affecting circumstances, in view of death, and in 'the neighborhood of the eternal world.' I shall now introduce some passages from a testimony of Christ, delivered under circumstances not less affecting, the very evening before his crucifixion. That the force of what I am about to quote may be felt, I will observe, that such obedience as Christ has assigned as a reason for his and his Father's love to his disciples, may surely be regarded as a reason for their acceptance with God.

'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' John xiv. 34, 35.

'He that hath my commandments and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, — and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him. — If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' John xiv. 21, 23.

'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit — so shall ye be my disciples. If ye keep my

commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.' John xv. 8 — 10.

'For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.' John xvi. 27.

These passages are a part of the dying testimony of him who loved us, delivered to his disciples a few hours prior to his crucifixion. As he knew he was about to leave them, his ardent desire was, to excite them to duty, and to console them in that hour of trial. If he knew that his sufferings were to be the only ground of their pardon, that their obedience was 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to their acceptance with God, and his righteousness must be the only ground on which they could be accepted and approved, why did he not try to console their minds by communicating these ideas? or rather, why did he communicate ideas in that solemn hour so perfectly the reverse? He doubtless felt as much for his apostles, as Dr Dwight did for his students, and as strong a desire to preserve them from fatal errors. Yet no teacher was ever farther than he was from teaching that our obedience is 'nothing' in regard to our acceptance with God.

If, then, from such a 'neighborhood of the eternal world,' our Saviour could teach that God is glorified when his children bear much of the obedient fruits of love, and that he loved the disciples of Christ because they loved him, and believed that he came out from God, with what propriety can any minister teach that our obedience is 'nothing,' or of no value, as to our acceptance with God?

These passages are perfectly harmonious with what the Messiah taught prior to his crucifixion. It was by 'obedience unto death' that he overcame, and obtained his throne; and it is by following his example and doing the will of the Father, that his disciples must overcome, so as to sit with him in glory. Those who 'die in the Lord' are his obedient disciples. 'Their works follow them,' and will be exhibited as the ground of the approving decision. 'Well done, good and faithful servants,' or 'Come ye blessed,' proceeds from the lips of the judge, together with the reason why they are permitted to enter into the joy of their Lord and inherit eternal life. Such being the views of Christ, we cannot wonder at the last declaration quoted from his lips, — **BLESSED ARE THEY THAT DO HIS COMMANDMENTS.**

The contrast now in view, between the testimony of the Messiah and that of Dr Dwight, seems to me about as perfect as it could be made by the use of words. One or the other of the testimonies must have been founded in mistake. Though I was once avowedly of the opinion of Dr D., I then saw and felt that, on some account or other, obedience to the gospel was essential to salvation. I cannot doubt that such was the case with the Doctor, and that such is the case with multitudes who have adopted his views. But I may say with truth, that while I professed to be of that opinion, it was always embarrassing to my mind; and of all my former opinions from which, on examination I have dissented, no one has occasioned me more astonishment than that now under consideration. So little is to be found in scripture which even *seems* to be in its favor, and so much that is clearly against it, that I am

unto me. — Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.'

It is worthy of particular notice, that, in each of the two cases now before us, the most decided approbation of the faithful or righteous is given on the ground of their fidelity or obedience; and no other reason is given in either case. It is also to be observed that in both of the parables, persons of an opposite character are disapproved and condemned on this ground, that they had failed to perform those acts of obedience on the ground of which the righteous had been accepted and approved. I will here only ask, do we find that Christ made 'nothing' of obedience as to acceptance with God?

We have some account of Christ's views on this subject many years after his ascension. 'The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him,' and which 'he sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John,' contains the following passages:

'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.' Rev. iii. 21.

The above is the language of Christ himself. In the following, John says:

'And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.' Rev. xiv. 13. Near the close of the vision John again heard the voice from heaven, 'Blessed are they that DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'

ceive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.'

The more I venerate the character, the attainments, and the usefulness of President Dwight, the more I am astonished that, with the bible in his hand, and after so many years spent in the study of that volume, he could speak to young students of *obedience* as 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to their acceptance with God. In view of the more perfect testimony of Christ, and my own 'neighborhood to the eternal world,' I am constrained to say, that I regard gospel obedience as important to me as the salvation of my soul,—and equally important as to my acceptance with God. If I do the will of God, I shall be saved; if not, I must perish.

It deserves to be noticed, in connection with the foregoing testimonies, that Paul's ground of rejoicing coincides with what I have attempted to establish as the scriptural terms of acceptance with God.

Intelligent and candid readers will admit, that no one of the inspired writers seems to have been more deeply impressed than Paul was with this truth, that the gospel salvation should be ascribed to the free grace of God as its original source, and to Jesus Christ as the Mediator through whom God was pleased to reveal and display his forgiving love to sinful men. Of the wonderful love of Christ, in becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Paul appears to have had the most exalted conceptions. To cultivate and display the same spirit seems to have been his highest ambition. Yet so far was he from relying on

the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of his personal justification, or acceptance with God, and so far from regarding his own personal obedience to Christ as of no value, as 'dross and dung,' that under the severest trials and most bitter persecutions, he could adopt for himself and others the following language: —

'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world.' 2 Cor. i. 12.

In regard to the joy he felt in having been an instrument of the conversion of others, he could say to them:

'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.' 1 Thess. i. 19, 20.

In the prospect of speedy dissolution, and perhaps too by the death of the cross, he could urge Timothy to 'endure afflictions, do the work of an Evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry'—assigning the following reason: —

'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all who love his appearing.' 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

Repeatedly he called on other Christians to imitate his example, as he had imitated the example of Christ; and in the following manner he speaks of the advantages of godliness: —

‘Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.’

By godliness here Paul did not mean the righteousness or obedience of Christ, for in the preceding verse he exhorted Timothy to ‘exercise himself unto Godliness,’ and then in the verse quoted he gives his reasons for so doing by stating the profits of godliness.

It is impossible for me to reconcile these and many other passages in Paul’s writings, with the belief that he understood and taught that his gospel obedience was of no value, or like ‘dross and dung’ in regard to his acceptance with God,—and that he relied wholly on the obedience of Christ for his personal justification. Had he been of these opinions, as many have supposed he was, he might have said in the first passage I have quoted, as follows : —

‘This is our rejoicing,’ that we are not to be accepted of God on account of our own righteousness, or our ‘simplicity and godly sincerity,’ but wholly on the ground of the righteousness of Christ. In the second he might have said, this is our glory and joy that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of our justification, and not our faithfulness and success as the ministers of Christ. In the third passage he might have said, ‘I am now ready to be offered,’ for I have renounced all reliance on my obedience to Christ as his apostle, and trust wholly in his obedience to God for my acceptance with the Father. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of Christ’s righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me in that day.

Instead of saying as he did of the profit of godliness,

he might have said, Godliness is of no value ; it is but dross and dung in regard to God's approbation ; but the righteousness of Christ is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and that which is to come.

But Paul was of a different opinion from what many have supposed ; and while he could renounce his former pharisaical righteousness, as of no value, calling it his ' own righteousness which is of the law,' he did so that he might possess and recommend the more excellent righteousness which results from an obedient faith in Christ Jesus. But are we not taught by Paul, Romans iv. 5, that God ' justifieth the ungodly ?' And if so, what can be the meaning but this, that God has no respect to our godliness, or our obedience to the gospel, in the Act of Justification ; and that he justifies us solely on the ground of what Christ has done and suffered ? To this I answer —

The text has doubtless been so understood by thousands ; but Dr Macknight has, in my opinion, given the more correct meaning. He says, ' The apostle's meaning is — *justifieth him who had been ungodly* — in like manner as Matt. xiv. 31, *the dumb speak* signifies that persons, who had been dumb, speak.'

Besides, if I have not misunderstood the orthodox clergy of New England, they believe, as I do, that the sinner is not justified in a state of impenitency as an impenitent sinner, nor until he becomes an humble, penitent believer, — and that this humble and reformed state of mind is a condition of justification. What then is this short of saying, or at least implying, that God has respect to something very different from the

righteousness of Christ in our justification? Why does he defer justification till we become humble and penitent? And why make these exercises an indispensable condition of pardon, if he has no respect to our obedience, but justifies wholly on another ground? Instead of saying that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of our justification, I would rather say, it is the *ground* of our faith in him, a *means* of our being brought into a reconciled state, and the *standard* by which we are to be justified; for we are to be justified no farther than we are conformed to Christ, having the same mind that was in him. He who has this mind in him, will rejoice in God, as the source of every good and perfect gift; he will rejoice in Jesus Christ, as the image of the invisible God, the medium through whom God has seen fit to dispense his spiritual blessings, who humbled himself and became obedient unto the death of the cross, and who has been exalted by God as a Prince and a Saviour, and the Judge of the living and the dead;—and still he will rejoice in this, the testimony of a good conscience, that with godliness and simplicity he has had his conversation in the world.

It has been a common opinion that Paul was the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and if this opinion is correct, we have some more striking passages of his, in agreement with those already quoted, and adapted to correct the opinion which has been so long entertained of his views of justification. I shall, however, remark particularly on but two passages.

In the eleventh chapter of this epistle, we have an account of what various persons did 'by faith;' from which it is evident that the faith which is pleasing to God, is a faith which worketh by love, and produces the fruits of obedience to him; and that the obedience thus produced is what is called 'the righteousness of faith;' hence obedient men are called 'the righteous,' or 'the just.' As the righteousness of Christ consisted in his obedience to God, or in doing the will of the Father, so it is in regard to his disciples. So far as they are obedient, they are righteous, and will be so denominated when the sheep shall have been separated from the goats.'

The first example of faith mentioned in the scriptures, is that of Abel. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous — God testifying of his gifts that he was righteous; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.' In what particular manner God testified of his gifts, we know not. It might be by causing fire to descend to consume the sacrifice, as in succeeding times. But it is pretty evident that in some way God testified his approbation of his offering, on the ground of which he was denominated righteous. And what is this but making obedience the ground of divine acceptance?

Enoch is the next on the list of men who, by the obedience of faith, obtained the approbation of God.

'By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, for God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossi-

ble to please him ; for he that cometh unto God must learn that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

May we not say, that Enoch's having the 'testimony that he pleased God,' is equivalent to having the testimony of being accepted and approved by God ? It is said that before his translation he had this testimony ; and this testimony was countersigned by his translation. It is said, 'by faith Enoch was translated.' This may mean no more than that by the obedience of his faith he so pleased God, as to assure to himself the privilege of translation, that he might not see death. So Christ said to a person that he healed, 'Thy faith hath saved thee,' as it was the condition or ground on which the favor was granted. The writer of this epistle doubtless had reference to what is said of Enoch in the book of Genesis. There it is said, that 'Enoch walked with God.' Walking with God implies both faith and obedience ; and it was in this way that 'he pleased God.' Without this obedient faith, it is 'impossible to please him ;' for faith without works is dead and worthless.

'He that cometh unto God must believe that he is —' that is, that he exists ; he must also believe 'that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.'

It would be folly and mockery for a man to profess or pretend to ask God for favors, who does not believe that such a Being exists. To have any rational hope of success in praying to God, we must not only believe in his existence ; we must also believe 'that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him —' that he is both able and willing to bestow favors on those who worship him in spirit and in truth. It is the obedient,

And those only, who diligently seek the Lord. To pray acceptably then, we must believe that obedience is acceptable to God — so acceptable that he is disposed to reward them who obey him, as a proof of his approbation. Hence we are told, that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

As saving faith implies cordial obedience to God, we may surely say, that without obedience it is impossible to please him; and the prophet Samuel has assured us, that '*to obey is better than sacrifice.*' We may all say with perfect truth, that he who cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently obey him. Let the question then be seriously asked, Is a belief that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of our acceptance with God, the same as a belief that God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek or obey him? Can a belief that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him be the same as a belief that obedience is 'nothing and less than nothing' as to our acceptance with God?

I shall bring to view one passage more from the epistle to the Hebrews. 'But to do good and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' Hebrews xiii, 16. It may be presumed that everything is acceptable to God with which he is 'well pleased;' and that he accepts of men who offer to him sacrifices with which he is well pleased. Nor can it be denied that 'to do good and communicate' are works of obedience. It seems to me impossible therefore to reconcile this text with what Dr Dwight has said of obedience. To accommodate the text to

his hypothesis should we not read as follows ? 'To do good and communicate forget not ;' but always bear in mind that obedience is 'nothing and less than nothing' as to your acceptance with God.

If we compare what is said of the faith of Enoch with what is said of 'to do good and communicate,' we may have reason to believe that faith and doing good mutually imply each other. How pertinent then is the exhortation—'Let us have grace whereby we may serve God *acceptably* with reverence and godly fear.' Hebrews xii, 28.

I might subjoin the testimony of Peter, as given in some passages in his epistles, which are supposed to have been written near the close of his own life, and after the death of Paul; but as he appears then to have been of the same opinion that he was when he preached at the house of Cornelius, and as this was an extraordinary occasion—one which required him to be particular and explicit, I shall introduce what he said on that memorable day.

Cornelius, the centurion, was not only a military officer, but a Gentile; yet he was a 'devout man, and one who feared God, with all his house, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.' To this pious man God sent an angel, with the following message: 'Thy prayers and thine alms have come up for a memorial before God; and now send men to Joppa and call for Simon whose surname is Peter; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.' Cornelius, without delay, complied with this direction. But such were the prejudices of the Jews against the Gentiles, that it

required a miracle to prepare the mind of Peter to comply with the request. This, however, God took care to effect in due season, by a vision, in which he was taught this lesson: 'What God has cleansed, that call not thou common.' Being thus instructed, he complied with the request from Cornelius; and when he arrived he found many collected together to hear him. Peter then related the vision by which God had prepared his mind to come; and then said, 'I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?' Cornelius, relating his own vision and the direction he received from the angel, then observed: 'Now, therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.'

'Then Peter opened his mouth,' and the first words that proceeded were the following: 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.'

But did not Peter go on and explain, that God had recently inflicted the punishment due to us all on the Messiah, who was crucified at Jerusalem, and that his sufferings were the only ground of pardon, and his righteousness the only ground of acceptance with God? No, verily; no such idea is so much as alluded to in the sermon. Having uttered the important declaration which I have quoted, Peter proceeded in the following manner: —

'The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all;) that word, I say, you know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the

baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed with the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even unto us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Thus was Cornelius, and all the Gentiles then assembled, clearly taught by the Apostle, that the blessings of peace, remission of sin, and acceptance with God, which the Messiah had been sent to reveal, were not for the Jews only, but for all who should become believers in him, or submit to his instructions. That God approved the sermon we have reason to believe, for 'while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word;' and Peter 'commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.' Where, then, is the intelligent Christian who can seriously reflect on the foregoing facts, and not say, in the language of Peter, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation HE THAT FEARETH HIM AND WORKETH RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ACCEPTED WITH HIM.'

* See Acts x. 34 to 43.

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N O T

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N O T

A L I T E R A L S A C R I F I C E .

IN reading the New Testament, especially the Epistles, we meet with language like the following, in relation to 'the author and finisher of our faith.' — 'This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.'* — 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.†' — 'For even Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us.‡' — 'Who, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree.§' — 'Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.¶' — 'We are sanctified through the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ.' 'This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins.' — 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal spirit offered himself, without spot, to God, purge your consciences.' — 'He

* Matt. xvi. 28. Luke xxii. 20. † John i. 29. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 7.
§ 1 Pet. ii. 24. ¶ Eph. v. 2.

appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.' 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many:'* with many other passages, not, perhaps, more strong and prominent, but of the same general character.†

The question very naturally arises in the mind of a serious reader of the scriptures, whether this language is to receive a *literal*, or a *figurative* construction. This is an important inquiry. If we say it is to be construed *strictly* or *literally*, the consequence seems irresistibly to follow, that Jesus Christ was offered, or that he offered himself, as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of either a part or the whole of the human race: that by his blood the Creator was rendered propitious to his creatures; or that Jesus was, in the words of the Westminster divines, literally and properly, 'a sacrifice to satisfy divine Justice:' and we must receive that as the doctrine of the scriptures, and convert it as we may to our spiritual nourishment; and to the correction and elevation of our views of the divine character and government. But if, on the other hand, we are to give all this sacrificial language a *metaphorical* or *figurative* construction, the doctrine just stated will derive from it no support; and we shall be left free to understand it in a manner which shall accord with the known and ordinary principles of the moral government of God; with those views of his character which are given us in other parts of the scripture; and with the ordinary acceptance of the same or similar lan-

* Heb. x. 10. 12. ix. 14. 26. 28.

† See Mark xiv. 24. 1 Cor. xi. 24. 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 John ii. 2. iv. 10.

guage applied by the sacred writers to other persons and things.

In relation to the exposition of the scriptures there is no question more important than this now before us, whether the sacrificial language used by the sacred writers in respect to Jesus Christ is to be construed strictly or metaphorically. We ought, then, to come to the question as those who are to give an account; — who are to answer, at a future day, for our use or abuse of the treasures of heavenly wisdom which are entrusted to our charge: — for our use or abuse of those high faculties, to which the Divine Being has addressed the revelation of his character and purposes contained in the sacred volume; and as those who ought to be ready to answer for that easy credulity which believes too much, not less than for that cautious skepticism which at last believes too little.

We begin the inquiry, then, by remarking that, if the passages in the New Testament which speak of Jesus as a sacrifice to God, when *strictly* construed, shall be found to harmonize with each other, *and* with other plain passages of the scriptures, *and* with known facts, then they *may* be construed literally; although at the same time, if, when understood *figuratively*, they be equally harmonious with known facts, with other parts of scripture, and with the usages of language, they *may* also be construed figuratively: and, in that case, it might still remain a question whether a figurative or a literal construction should prevail. But if these several passages, when construed *literally*, be found to contradict *other passages of scripture, or certain*

known facts, or each other, then, the literal *must* be abandoned for a metaphorical construction.

How then, in the first place, does the effect produced upon the mind by understanding literally the several passages quoted from the New Testament, in the beginning of this article, and others like them, harmonize with language like the following? ‘Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’* ‘Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required.’† ‘Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering.’‡ ‘He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.’§ ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, even to our God for he will abundantly pardon.’|| These are but a few from a multitude of texts in the Old Testament either expressly declaring, or plainly implying that our Heavenly Father, who is also our Judge, is ready to forgive the penitent merely in consideration, or on condition, of his repentance and reformation; and that a literal sacrifice, either of man or beast, considered as a religious act, or anything more than a security, or a test, of allegiance to the Jewish theocracy, is not what God requires at the hand of his creatures. The same impression is deepened

* Mich. vi. 7.

† Ps. xl. 6.

‡ Ps. li. 16.

§ Prov. xxviii. 13.

|| Isai. lv. 7.

when we find this language quoted from the Old Testament into the New: 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; — in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast no pleasure:'* and when we hear Jesus himself approving and confirming the opinion of the scribe,† that to love God and our neighbor is more than all whole burnt offering and sacrifice. From this latter class of texts, according to the only construction of which they appear to be capable, we infer irresistibly that pardon is ready and free to the penitent, and that it depends, in no case, upon the condition of any offering or sacrifice for sin: while, from the former class, if construed literally, the conviction seems equally irresistible that Jesus, our Lord, has become a Saviour by having offered himself up as a proper sacrifice to propitiate his Father, by expiating our sins. Are these representations of the divine proceedings consistent with each other? Does not a literal construction of the former class of texts make them irreconcilable with the latter class? There certainly appears to be either discord between them, or, what is no better than discord — 'harmony not understood.'

Secondly. Does the doctrine that Jesus was a proper sacrifice, which seems to result from a literal construction of the sacrificial language applied to him in the New Testament, agree with *known facts*?

It must be granted, no one will deny, that if Christ was literally a sacrifice to God, *he must have been offered as such*; he must have been put to death by some one *as a sacrifice*. For the very nature of a sacrifice

* Heb. x. 5, 6.

† Mark xii. 33.

is that of a religious offering made by some person or persons to some God or Gods, as a religious act. There is no prayer, where there is no intent to pray. In the idea of a gift, is embraced that of a giver. There can be no sacrifice where there is not an *offering made* with a *sacrificial intent*. If Jesus then was a sacrifice, who sacrificed him ?

1. Was he offered, as a sacrifice, by the *Romans* ? They were his immediate executioners. It was a Roman magistrate that pronounced sentence of death against him ; a Roman soldiery that executed that sentence ; a Roman spear that pierced his side. Was he offered, as a sacrifice, by the Romans ? — To this hypothesis it may be objected, in the first place, that *human sacrifices were never allowed by the established laws of Rome*. It is true that a few, very few, cases of human sacrifices can be found in Roman history during the eight hundred years from the foundation of the city to the death of Christ. Some time after Christ, during the reign of Nero or Vespasian, Pliny states that human sacrifices sometimes occurred in Rome. But, before that declining period of Roman greatness and virtue, we find but a single instance in which human sacrifices were offered in Rome, to propitiate the gods : and this took place nearly two centuries before Christ, when the approach of Hannibal to its gates had thrown the city into the utmost consternation. But the historian, to whom we are indebted for the knowledge of this fact, assures us that the place had never before been stained by his countrymen with the blood of human victims. And from the terms of abhorrence in

which the Romans, at that very time, speak of those nations which sacrificed even their prisoners of war, we learn in what detestation human sacrifices were held by that people.*

To the present hypothesis it may be objected, secondly, that *Rome*, the city itself, was the *only place in which human victims were ever offered by the Romans*. But Jesus was put to death in *Judea*. — A third objection is, that, among the Romans, *all sacrifices were offered by their priesthood*; whereas Jesus was executed by their soldiery. And, fourthly, it may be objected that, whereas the few human victims that were offered in Rome were *buried alive*.† Jesus, on the contrary, suffered death *upon a cross*, a species of punishment inflicted by the Romans, only upon slaves, robbers, assassins, and those who were adjudged guilty of sedition:‡ and we know, for the evangelists inform us, that this was the crime for which our Lord was tried and, however improperly, condemned. — Was he, then, offered as a sacrifice by the Romans?

2. Was he offered, as a sacrifice, by the *Jews*. To the idea that he was, the first objection which we have to offer is, that there is no evidence in the scriptures that, in procuring his death, they had any *intent* to offer him as a sacrifice. And we must remember that a sacrificial intent is as indispensable, in order to constitute anything a literal sacrifice, as an intent to pray, is to render any address a prayer. And, secondly, we

* See the speech of Cn. Metellus before the Senate, in regard to the Galli, in Asia. Livii Hist. Lib. xxxviii.

† Jahn's Biblical Archæology, sec. 404.

object they could not have intended to offer Jesus as a sacrifice, for the following reasons. 1. The only sacrifices which the Jews ever did, or ever could offer, in the land of Canaan, without committing a crime that was construed into treason, and capitally punished as such, were those which were *expressly appointed in the Mosaic law*. That law not only does not permit human sacrifices, but it repeatedly forbids them;* and abounds with the most fearful denunciations against them. 2. All the bloody or animal sacrifices which were required or allowed by Moses were either *piacular*, such as were offered in expiation of trespasses or sins; or *eucharistical*, such as were offered as testimonials of gratitude. All these must be *animals* of certain kinds, distinctly specified. With these facts before our eyes, it is a needless waste of labor to prove that our Lord could not have been regarded by the Jews as a literal sacrifice, either eucharistical, or piacular—either as an expression of gratitude, or as an atonement for sin. 3. A third reason why the Jews could not have considered Jesus a sacrifice, of any kind, is that, from before the entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan, they were strictly and repeatedly forbidden, under penalty of excision, to offer any sacrifices

* Levit. xviii. 21. Deut. xviii. 10. 2 Kings xvii. 17, 18. Ps. cvi. 37, 38, 40. Deut. xii. 31. — If then, Jesus *had* been offered by the Jews, *animo sacrificandi*, with the most sacrificial intent, the offering would have been a capital crime by their law, and, of course, not an acceptable sacrifice with God, who gave their law; for he accepts no sacrifice of which the very offering is guilty. To even a heathen moralist it was obvious ‘nullam *scelere* religionem exsolvi;’ — that no religious duty is discharged by the perpetration of a crime. — Livii Hist. Lib. ii.

whatever, except in *such place as the Lord should appoint for that purpose*.* Before the building of the temple, the place of sacrifice seems not to have been permanently fixed; but the altar was raised wherever the tabernacle stood, or wherever the ark of the Covenant, which was the great sanctuary of the Israelitish religion, happened to rest.† The object of this law, from which there was no exception, except that a *prophet* had authority to dispense with it,‡ was to guard the worshippers, and even the priests of Jehovah, from all temptation and all opportunity of relapsing into the idolatry by which they were surrounded, and to which they were so propense. This law was, it is true, often violated by wicked monarchs before, and even after, the building of the temple. It was occasionally violated even down to the time of the transportation into Babylon; and, indeed, the transgression of this law was the principal cause of the transportation. But after the return of the Jews from Babylon, they observed that law so faithfully, that not an instance of its violation in Judea § can be shown till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. And it is owing to the destruction of the temple and altar in Jerusalem, that all Jewish sacrifices have ever since been sus-

* Levit. xvii. 1—9.—especially vs. 8, 9. Deut. xii. 5—28. Levit. xxvi. 30.

† See Michaelis, Mos. Law, sec. 188.

‡ 1 Sam. xiii. 8—14, xvi. 1—5. 1 Kings xviii. 21—40.

§ The case of Onias, in Egypt, (Joseph. Ant. Jud. xiii. 3 sec. 3. Michaelis' Mos. Law, sec. 188.) could hardly be considered as an exception, had the observation been general. But it is no exception, restricted, as the statement is, to *Judea*.

pended. From the return of the Jews from Babylon to this moment, the offering of a sacrifice, of any kind, in any other place than the altar and temple in Jerusalem, would have appeared to them as an inexpressible offence, the most shocking of all abominations. But Jesus 'suffered without the gate.'^{*}

Again, 4. As with the Romans, so it was, especially after the captivity, with the Jews; all their bloody sacrifices must be offered *by the hands of their own priesthood*.† The interference of strangers, and especially of their enemies, with the offering of their sacrifices, would have been regarded by the Jews with the utmost horror. Yet Jesus died by the hands of the idolatrous Romans, and the Jews were clamorous that he *might* die by their hands. Did they, then, consider him as a sacrifice? *Could* they have so considered him? If in any sense, it can be said that Jesus was sacrificed by the Jews, it can be only in a figurative sense. It may be said that they sacrificed him to their envy, to one of the most bitter and malignant of their own passions; but not to the God of their fathers, the God of holiness and mercy, either as an expression of their gratitude or as an expiation of their sins.

3. Did Jesus, then, sacrifice *himself*? It will not be denied that, as, at one time, it might be said that the Jews sacrificed our Lord to their envy, so, at another, it may be said, that he sacrificed himself upon the altar of his duty, or of benevolence, or of pity to the human race. But this is figurative language; and by it we mean that he devoted himself, gave up his life, rather

^{*} Heb. xiii. 12.

† Jahn's Arch. sec. 378.

than abandon the arduous and painful offices which he had been commissioned to fill;—the offices of our Teacher, example, and Saviour. But this metaphorical sacrifice is the result of a *metaphorical* construction of the passages under consideration. A literal construction of those passages makes the Saviour not only a literal sacrifice, but the greatest of all literal sacrifices. As such, we now ask, did he offer himself?

To the idea that he did, it may be objected, 1. That he never told his disciples that he intended to offer himself, he never gave them to understand that he considered himself—as a sacrifice. On the contrary, he did tell his disciples that he came, among other things, to give his life, not a sacrifice, but a *ransom* for many. On this fact we have something more to offer shortly. 2. We may object to the supposition that Jesus offered himself as a literal sacrifice to God, in any sense, the known fact, to which all the evangelists testify, that he did not offer himself at all. While he did not shun death, if it lay where duty led him, he did not seek it. He was followed, arrested, led away to trial and to death. He did not court danger but rather sought to avoid it. When we see the Roman Curtius* voluntarily leaping into a gulf to appease the offended gods of his country and his worship; or the two Decii, father and son,† after deliberately devoting themselves as victims, and, as such, receiving consecration from the priesthood, voluntarily rush into the thickest ranks of their enemies, and fall by their swords, we say that *here* are men who offer themselves a sac-

* Liv. Hist. Lib. vii.

† Id. Lib. viii. x.

rifice to their country and its gods. We admire their patriotism; and, while we lament their superstition, we give them credit for a lofty, though perhaps misguided, devotion. But how different from the conduct of these men was that of Jesus of Nazareth! They voluntarily plunged into the abyss, that they they might be destroyed. He cast himself upon the current of his duty, and was borne on by that. They sought death. He merely did not shrink from it, when called by duty to meet it. They actively gave themselves to the destruction which they might have escaped. He passively, though magnanimously, submitted to that which appeared inevitable. So far from courting his sufferings and seeking death, his prayer to his Heavenly Father was reiterated and earnest, that, if it were possible, the cup which was preparing for him might pass from him. How then can it be said that Jesus offered *himself* to God as a literal sacrifice of any kind?—And if it is a fact, that he did not offer himself,—if it is a fact that neither the Romans nor the Jews offered him—as a sacrifice, by whom was he so offered?—Is not the literal construction of the sacrificial language relating to him, contradicted by so many known facts, that we ought to hesitate before we adopt it?

Thirdly. Do not many of the texts in which Jesus is spoken of as a sacrifice, when literally construed, contradict *each other*, no less than other scriptures, and known facts?—‘Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a *body* hast thou prepared me.’* For what?—A *sacrifice!* to be made an *offering!*—Again; we have

* Heb. x. 5.

just remarked that although Jesus never spoke of himself as a *sacrifice*, yet he did tell his disciples that he came to give his life a *ransom* for many.* Now, though, in the metaphorical use of language, we may say, of the same thing, now, that it is a sacrifice, and now a ransom, we are not allowed that license when we are using language in its literal sense. Strictly speaking, a sacrifice is one thing, and a ransom is another, so different that one can neither be used nor mistaken for the other. If, then, the body, or the blood, or the life of Jesus was, either strictly or figuratively, a *ransom*, as he declares that it was, either strictly or figuratively, — it could not have been a literal *sacrifice*.

Again. Does the writer to the Hebrews,† in one of the texts quoted at the beginning of this article, say, ‘This man, after that he had once offered a *sacrifice* for sins?’ Paul, in another of these texts, says: ‘for even Christ our *passover*, is sacrificed for us.’‡ We have already seen that all bloody sacrifices under the Mosaic law, the only sacrifices in Judea that were not idolatrous, were either *piacular* or *eucharistical*. All *sacrifices* for sins were *piacular*. The *passover* however was *eucharistical*.§ The literal construction of one of these texts makes Jesus a *piacular* sacrifice, an offering made as an expiation or atonement for sin. The literal construction of another makes him an *eucharistical* sacrifice. But if he be, either strictly or metaphorically, as one text represents him, an *eucharistical* sacrifice, an acknowledgment of divine mercy, — he cannot be as the letter of another would seem to make

* Matt. xx. 28.

† Heb. x. 12.

‡ 1 Cor. v. 7.

§ Jahn’s Arch. sec. 353. See also sec. 354.

him, a piacular sacrifice,—a satisfaction of divine justice.

Once more. ‘This,’ says our Lord, ‘is my blood of the New Covenant.’* By this we are probably to understand that the blood or death of Jesus was the on, sanction, or seal, — the evidence or surety — of that New Covenant of which he was the Mediator. But the animal that was slain or sacrificed, among all Oriental nations, in ratification of a Covenant, was never considered as a piacular, but always as an eucharistical sacrifice.† They were not indeed exclusively sacrifices of thanksgiving, as were some others; but they were directly opposed to expiatory offerings. If Jesus, therefore, was literally a sacrifice of either of these three kinds, — *federal*, a sacrifice in ratification of a covenant; — *paschal*, an offering made at the passover; — or *piacular*, a sacrifice for sins; — he could not have been either of the two. If he was a *paschal*, he could have been neither a piacular nor a federal sacrifice: if a *piacular*, neither a federal nor paschal: if a *federal*, neither a paschal nor a piacular. But a literal construction of the passages in question, makes him either or all of them indifferently. Is not this alone sufficient proof that he was literally neither? Is it not sufficient proof that a metaphorical construction of these texts must be adopted, since a literal construction arrays them in such direct contradiction to each other, to the plain declarations of God in other parts of the scriptures, and to known incontrovertible facts?

Before answering these questions affirmatively we

* Matt. xxvi. 28.

† Jahn’s Arch. sec. 383, supported Exod. xxiv. 4—8.

ought perhaps to pause, and ask ourselves whether it is according to the authorized usages of language to give a figurative interpretation to expressions so direct, and apparently so plain, as the sacred writers use in most of the texts which we are considering. This is undoubtedly a proper inquiry, and it ought to be faithfully pursued. At the same time, however, we ought to look back upon the ground that we have already gone over, and seriously consider that, having shown that a literal interpretation of the texts in question makes them directly contradictory to other passages of scripture, — to known facts — and to themselves;— no other alternative now remains to us than either to give them a figurative construction, or to reject them as false, because thus contradictory.

Bearing this consideration in mind, then, do we not find expressions similar to many of these in question, in ordinary use, in our own times, in the frigid zone of an occidental and modern language? We say, of the intemperate man, that he *gives himself up* to his appetites; of the sensualist, that *he sacrifices himself* upon the altar of his passions: and by this we mean that they abandon themselves respectively to vicious indulgences though their vices are their destruction. The parent *suffers for his children*. The patriot, with a generous devotion, *gives himself up as a sacrifice* to his country, when he endangers and loses his all — his life itself, in its defence. But by this language no one understands that the parent, or patriot, literally offers himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for his family or his country. Civil liberty is secured, even its best estate, by the *sacrifice* of our natural rights. The great cause of phi-

lanthropy is served only by the philanthropist's *taking upon himself* a part of the *sufferings* of those whom he travels and toils and watches to bless. Yet, by the use of such language, nobody is led into the belief of a literal sacrifice, or a literal vicarious suffering. As we go back into the depths of antiquity, we find, in writers of the highest authority, language still more bold, though of the same general character. Says Cicero, speaking of his efforts and privations in saving his country from the conspiracy of Catiline, — 'In this season of your alarm I have passed over many things in silence: I have made many concessions: I have undergone much: *I have healed many of the public maladies, as it were by my own sufferings.*' Again, 'If the consulship be granted me only on this condition, that I endure every kind of affliction, and pain, and even torture, I will bear them not only with fortitude but cheerfully, provided that *by my sufferings I may secure the dignity and salvation of yourselves and of Rome.*' How far is this language below Isaiah's: 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed.'^{*}

Josephus, an author of the same nation, and nearly of the same age, with the writers of the New Testament, uses language in relation to the fortitude shown by the Maccabees, under their tortures, and the benefits derived to Israel from their sufferings, which equals, if it does not transcend, the strongest expressions of substitution and expiatory suffering used by the sacred writers in speaking of our Lord. After his long account of their firmness and their death, under the tor-

^{*} Isaiah liii. 5.

tures inflicted by command of Antiochus, he says: 'These men, therefore, having been sanctified of God, have attained this glory — (of standing by the throne of God and enjoying a happy eternity) — and not this glory only; but it was through them, having become, as it were, *the ransom of a sinful people*, that the enemies of our nation were defeated, the tyrant punished and the dishonor of our country wiped away:— and, *by the blood of these pious men, and the propitiation of their death*, Divine Providence effected the salvation of oppressed Israel.* This last example of the figurative use of sacrificial language being from a Jewish writer, who is speaking of men that devoted themselves upon the altar of their religion and their country, is particularly illustrative of the language of other Jewish writers, when speaking of one who also devoted himself to dishonor and death for the benefit of his brethren; and who also, having been sanctified by the Father,† was, in consideration of this obedience unto death, highly exalted by him,‡ and crowned with glory and honor.§ But we need not go abroad for examples of the use of sacrificial language in relation to men and things, to the full as bold and as strong as the sacred writers use in relation to Christ. The sacred writers themselves, especially those of them who most frequently use this language in respect to Christ, use it not less frequently in connexion with other subjects; and that, too, without ever having been understood as speaking literally.

Does Peter say that '*Christ suffered for us*?'|| He

* See Josephus 'De Maccabæis,' sec. 17.—See also 2 Maccab. vii. 37, 38. in the LXX.

† John x. 36. ‡ Phil. ii. 8, 9. § Heb. ii. 9. || 1 Pet. ii. 21.

suffered in such a sense that '*we also may follow his steps.*' But, if he suffered as a literal sacrifice to God, as an expiation for sin, does it not follow that we must suffer for others as a sin offering — that the servants to whom these words are addressed, should suffer as a sacrifice to God for their master's sins? Did *Christ* '*become poor, or live in poverty, for our sake?*'* Paul, also, '*endured all things for the elects*' sake, that they also might obtain salvation.† Can a stronger text be produced, from the New Testament, to prove that *Christ* was delivered to death *for our sake*, than this of Paul, to a very different purpose: '*For we, who live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.*' Did‡ *Christ* suffer *in our behalf*, or *for our sake*? Paul says to the Philippians, '*unto you it is given, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but to suffer for his sake.*' Does he say to the Christians at Ephesus that '*Christ hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God?*'§ To those at Rome || he says, '*I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.*' To the Philippians he says, ¶ '*If I be offered upon the sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all:*' and to Timothy he says, when he feels that his labors must soon close, '*I am now ready to be offered,*' or more correctly, '*I am already poured out as an offering.*** What is meant, by this language, but that the aged Apostle was exhausted, that he had worn himself out, in the discharge of the duties of the office to which he been called of God? Can we suppose

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

† 2 Tim. ii. 10.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

§ Eph. v. 2. || Rom. xii. 1. ¶ Phil. ii. 17. ** 2 Tim. iv. 6.

that Paul considered himself as a literal sacrifice? that he presented himself, or besought the Roman Christians to present themselves to God, as a propitiatory offering? If not, why should we not give a metaphorical construction to similar, but not stronger language, in relation to Christ; who also fell a victim, — a nobler and a spotless victim, — to the cause that had been committed to him? Paul was the minister of Christ unto the Gentiles, that the *offering up of the Gentiles* might be acceptable, being sanctified by the same Holy Spirit.* Has Christ *given himself for us a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor*?† The charity which the Philippians sent by Epaphroditus to Paul, was *an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well pleasing unto God*.‡ Were the Gentiles offered as a literal sacrifice to God? Do we give a strict construction to that language which calls the charitable contributions of Christians to each other a sacrifice? If not, it is according to the usages of language, and especially of the language of the New Testament, to apply to persons and things indifferently, and in a figurative sense, the language which was strictly applicable to the proper sacrifices of the Mosaic law.

Inasmuch, then, as the sacrificial language of the New Testament when applied to all persons *may be*, and applied to all except Jesus *must be*, understood figuratively; it certainly *may be* so understood when applied to him. And, inasmuch as a literal construction of that language in the several texts where he is the subject of discourse, would make those texts contradictory to other passages of scripture, to facts, and to

Rom. xv. 16.

† Eph. v. 2.

‡ Phil. iv. 18.

themselves, we conclude that the metaphorical sense *must* be adopted.

Or shall we, disregarding the opposition of these texts when literally construed to each other, to plain declarations of scripture, and to multiplied scriptural as well as other historical facts — shall we still insist upon construing them literally? and, giving up our reason and our faith to the consequences of such a construction, shall we believe, as the letter would compel us to believe, that our Lord was not only a real sacrifice, but every sort of sacrifice? — that he is now, a *federal* or testamentary sacrifice,* whose blood is to ratify a covenant; now, a *piacular* offering, whose blood is to make an atonement for sin;† and now, a *passover*, to commemorate our deliverance from sin and death? Shall we believe now, that he *was* offered,‡ and now that he offered up § or sacrificed || *himself*? Shall we believe that he is now the offering, and now the priest who makes the offering?¶ If we are prepared to plunge into depths of belief like these, looking to the letter as the only guide of our faith, what shall restrain us from going on, and believing that Jesus is a *vine*,** and a *way*,†† and a *door*,‡‡ and a *corner-stone*;§§ and all this, at the same time that he is a *shepherd*, |||| and a *lion*, ¶¶ and the bright and morning *star*?*** Are we prepared to adopt a system of construing the scriptures

* Matt. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24. Lu. xxii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 24.

† 1 Pet. ii. 24. 2 Cor. v. 21. Eph. v. 2. ‡ Heb. ix. 28.

§ Heb. ix. 14. || Heb. ix. 26.

¶ Heb. ix. 11. ** John xv. 1. †† John xiv. 6.

‡‡ John x. 1. 7. 9. §§ Eph. ii. 20. 1 Pet. ii. 6. ||| John x. 11.

¶¶ Rev. v. 5. *** Rev. ii. 28.

which shall lead us into such gross inconsistencies? and shall we delude ourselves with the idea that these are the deep things of God? Shall we follow the letter, when it will compel us to believe that our Lord has assumed so many different forms, and that he acted and suffered in so many inconsistent characters, at the moment when, on the same principle, we are required to believe that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever?*

Shall we not rather believe that, in much of what the early disciples of Jesus said of him, they spoke, as all orientals speak, in a highly figurative style? Regarding him as the greatest of the prophets, and the most illustrious of the teachers who had come from God, was it wonderful that they should apply to him every title of dignity and glory? Recently converted, as they had been, from a religion abounding in sacrifices, was it not natural for them, especially when addressing those who had been educated in the same religion, to speak of their new faith in terms which had been familiar to them from their childhood. Admiring, as they did, the virtues of our Lord, and deeply affected, as they must have been, by the sufferings by which those virtues were called forth and proved; their feelings must have been excited, whenever he was the subject of their thoughts or their discourse, to more than their ordinary warmth, and to a neglect of the cold and studied correctness of the careful rhetorician. When they considered that their master had fallen a victim to his own fidelity, and to the envy of others, what

* Heb. xiii. 8.

was more natural than that they should speak of him as a sacrifice?—a sacrifice, now of one kind and now of another, according to their own circumstances at the time they were speaking, or to the other subjects of their discourse, or to the particular benefit which had resulted to the world from what he had done or suffered. When, either in prophetic vision, or in a rational anticipation of what must be effected by the religion of Jesus, they looked forward to the ultimate reformation of mankind—to the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance and sin from the face of the earth, what more natural than that they should call him ‘the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.’ If the new covenant is sealed or ratified by his death, his is ‘the blood of the covenant,’ and the gospel itself, is ‘the new covenant in his blood.’ If an apostle is comparing the new converts to a mass of unleavened bread, this bread, being eaten at the passover, brings that festival to his mind; but Christ was crucified on the eve of the feast of unleavened bread; and then ‘Christ is himself our passover who was sacrificed for us.’

The same kind of construction will guide us in other similar passages, and enable us to preserve, unimpeached, the best faculties of our nature, our reverence for the sacred oracles, and, above all, the adorable excellence of the divine character. It will enable us more correctly to understand the documents of our religion, more gratefully to rejoice in the light which they shed upon our path here, and upon our prospects hereafter, and more readily to convert to our spiritual nourishment and strength, the bread of life which came down from heaven in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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REPORT.

To the Executive Committee of the
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

GENTLEMEN, — Permit us to lay before you the details of our mission during the last six months.

The office, opened in the fall, has been continued to the present date, and we are happy in being able to state that it has fully answered our expectations.

The large number of applicants that have been brought under our notice among the poor, has enabled us to approach somewhat nearer to just and definite views of the extent and character of that class of our population.

Many of the cases referred to us have shown so clearly the necessity of caution and judgment, in exercising true benevolence, that we rejoice in having been permitted thus to learn the lesson. The past months have been full of instruction. They have laid before us the facts, and revealed to our experience the principles, upon which the practice of charity ought always to proceed.


It is true that a great amount of labor — and much of it of an unpleasant kind — has been devolved upon

us; but we met with such daily proofs of the excellence of the measure, that little reflection and slight strength of purpose alone were needed to carry us through. Besides, we had availed ourselves of a movement of the happiest influence, which cheered while it strengthened us.

In October we invited all the other Ministers at large, in the city, to consult with us upon the expediency and practicability of a union of our efforts, so far as related to the temporal and moral wants of the poor. The proposed coöperation met their approval. Rev. Mr Collier reported at the second meeting a plan of concert, that has been adhered to through the winter; and he, with Rev. Dr Eaton, Rev. Messrs Rosseter, Cleveland, Barbour, Cushing, Gooch, Grew, and Green, have met with us at our office each fortnight. We have discussed together the objects of our care; we have communicated to each other the results of our individual experience and observation. In this way our meetings have proved the source of valuable information to all.

At the same time, we endeavored to secure a better distribution of assistance to the poor, by confining ourselves each to a particular district of the city. The division of labor was in itself an important point; and the whole work thus fell to so many hands as to be greatly lightened for those engaged in bearing it.

Allow us here to thank our associates and brethren for the zeal and interest they have displayed in promoting the success of these measures. We rejoice with them in the hope that the fruits of the past winter's experience will never be lost. From the good effects



of union and coöperation in our own case, we have been convinced that a similar concert and organization would be of the highest service, if adopted by the various benevolent societies of our community.

It was with a view to such an extended union, and in the desire to exempt ourselves, as Missionaries, mainly from the care of the temporal wants of the poor, that a Committee was appointed, to invite the various Benevolent Associations of the city to send delegates to a meeting at our office.

The Societies, almost without exception, very cheerfully complied with the request. Several meetings have been held. A report upon the contemplated union has been offered and accepted. It has been printed at the request of the delegates, in order that the members of each Society may have an opportunity to take it into careful consideration;— and two plans have been annexed to it, one of which, it is hoped, will meet with general acceptance.

We would refer all who are interested in the subject to the report, and its plans,— confident that nothing need be added by us to show the great value of the measures proposed therein.

It is highly important that the several Societies should be left so far independent of each other as not to prevent their doing all the good, in the way of relief, which they have done in times past. No one should be merged in any other. We surely need among our poor all the assistance which the independent action of these Societies has hitherto afforded: and yet, it is believed that a degree of union and coöperation would result, from the adoption of either of the plans brought

forward in the report, that would greatly enhance the good effected by all. Mutual information, touching each other's operations, would be afforded. A desired check would be placed upon imposture and ill-desert. Harmony of purposes and views would follow, to enlighten and elevate all engaged in the mutual and high office of relieving human distress. We look forward with pleasing anticipation to the action of the several Societies upon this matter. We have been happy to trace the good effects that have thus early followed the meetings of their representatives. We cannot but hope that other and greater results may be allowed to take place. A little further experience, a little closer union and more perfect organization, will prove the best of all recommendations, and cannot but lead to the happiest issue. All will then be secured that is needed to complete the success of the Benevolent Associations of our city.

Should further steps be taken on this ground, by the Societies, the Ministers at large will be more free to pursue those objects of a moral and spiritual nature to which their labors ought primarily, if not exclusively, to be devoted.

The friends of our Mission are aware, that a large portion of our time and attention has long been given to the worldly necessities of the poor. This, in part, has been unavoidable. We were brought into close and daily contact with those who, whatever wants they had beyond, were certainly destitute of much that we could supply — much that must be supplied, indeed, before attention could be secured to the means of higher and holier relief.

Besides, we were willing and even desirous to take upon ourselves the supply of temporal wants, that we might gather from personal experience the true principles of such charity, and trace, through our own observation, the operation and effect of the various forms of public and private benevolence. Such observation and experience, we need hardly say, are still far from complete. However full and valuable the instruction to which Providence has led us, we feel that the future has much to unfold.

Whoever has given his attention to the character, situation, wants and claims of the dependent portions of his fellow-creatures, must have early felt his own ignorance, and learned soon to prize the instruction such studies afford. There is so much that is wrong, unwise, and sinful — there is so much to be lamented over, and so much to be amended — there are such paltry principles acted upon, and such poor schemes in operation — there is with the rich and the poor, in all their intercourse, such a departure from the will of the Heavenly Father, that the subject of pauperism alone is worth the study and devotion of a life. We never shall regret that we have been called to pursue it as far as we have.

But the time seems now to have arrived when the Ministers at large can devolve on societies and others the supply of whatever temporal necessities come under their notice. The number of Benevolent Associations has greatly increased of late; — that of individuals, who are willing to take charge of one or more poor families, has increased also. These, together with the public means of relief, acting with a slight degree of concert and system, will be amply sufficient to meet all future demands.

Directing those we find in want to the Overseers of the Poor, the Officers of Benevolent Societies, or to private individuals, as circumstances shall dictate, let it be our duty to visit the sick and dying, to cheer the mourner, to plead with the impenitent, and to minister to the necessities of the souls of those we visit. Enough surely has been said to satisfy all, that 'there are in our city thousands, many thousands of our fellow-creatures, who are destitute of the instructions and benefits of religion. Living in the midst of christian institutions and influences, they are, in fact, strangers to them. They have no place of worship, no religious teacher, no christian friend, no sacred associations. Their moral sentiments are not cultivated, their spiritual natures are bound in darkness and torpor. They do not know themselves; they do not know the Saviour, who died to raise such as they to a new life; they do not know the Heavenly Father, whose sunshine is on their daily paths, and whose mercy is waiting to be gracious to their souls.' It is to these, and to the supply of the great wants of these, that we would devote ourselves. None of them 'are unsusceptible of influence; they may be addressed, reclaimed, enlightened, sanctified, and made happy Christians.' We believe this on the authority of our Master's religion — we know it to be true on the ground of experience; and while we bless God for the good that has already been gained, we cannot but look forward with the liveliest hope to that wider and better influence which must follow our labors when more strictly confined to the spiritual and religious nature of the beings we are to address.

We have hitherto learned, in our connection with the

poor, much that will aid and guide us in our future exertions to confer upon them the highest benefits. It has been a painful part of our experience to witness, in many cases, the demoralizing tendency of much of the benevolent action of our community.

The most direct and obvious way to supply the wants of the poor, is to give them money, or the articles they need. The pressure of their wants, and the necessity of immediate relief, often suggest and warrant such steps. Assistance, thus promptly rendered to the destitute, is an essential and pleasing feature of true charity. No friend to the rich or the poor would ever see this changed. Let distress and suffering, when they come to the home or the bosom of our brother, be met with open and ready benevolence. We then shall work together with God. We then shall lighten each other's burdens, according to his will. We then shall receive and improve the lessons and discipline of life.

But, if direct modes of supplying want, instead of being casual and confined to occasional exigencies, are permitted to become habitual and even of uninterrupted continuance, must not great evils be expected to follow? Assistance then becomes regular; it ceases to awaken gratitude; it can be calculated upon; it takes the place of prudence, foresight, and economy; and through such approaches must it not undermine the excellence and dignity of human character? What is there, in the Providence of the Heavenly Father, that authorises such perverted forms of benevolence to his children? He hath created man to depend upon his own exertions, for such wise and clear purposes of good that every departure from such dependence,

unless absolutely unavoidable, should awaken distrust and apprehension. It is not safe for human beings to look for the supply of their wants to the gratuitous bounty of others. If it be possible, it is certainly better for all of us to meet our own necessities with our own means. Free, unconditional, uninterrupted assistance has been offered to the poor of England, till millions have been expended, and the prospect opened that millions more will be required. And the case is very much the same in this country, both as relates to public and private charity. We have spent our millions also.

It would be a happy thing if the loss of money were all that we had to regret. Energy of character has been cramped — a bounty has been set upon idleness — unwise and needless temptations have been offered, and too little regard has been paid to the means of protecting and promoting the virtue and peace of the poor. The causes of pauperism have been overlooked; relief has too often been so applied as to multiply and enlarge them; and where the causes have been thus circumstanced, we all know how it must have been with the effect.

Let us hope for a wiser mode of benevolence for the future. Let us learn that by encouraging habits of prudence, industry and economy we may often both relieve the wants and elevate the characters of our fellow-creatures — thus conferring more than double benefit upon them. A proper degree of self-respect, a reasonable love of independence, and a cheerful and true submission to the will of Divine Providence, will be better gifts than silver or gold. Let it be our en-

deavor to improve the condition of the poor, by educating their minds and morals, — by opening new fields to their exertions, — by revealing to them their hidden energies and talents, and we shall prove ourselves indeed their friends. To exercise worthy benevolence we must remember the whole nature, and call before us all the wants, of our dependent brother. He is not merely a creature of this world, with bodily infirmities and temporal necessities to be met and supplied; — he is born for higher ends and a nobler existence; he carries with him even here, and under all his trials, a better part, with wants and claims of its own, that should form the basis of our whole intercourse with him. Charity should be given freely; but its necessity should first be learned by strict inquiry; it should result from accurate knowledge of those who ask for it; and its effect upon them should always be watched with close and jealous vigilance.

It is true that such a course will demand more attention, more labor, a greater degree of wisdom and reflection, and altogether a wider view and deeper love of duty than are common with us. But let it never be forgotten that to do good, while it is one of the happiest and highest, is also one of the most difficult of human employments. Benevolence must act only under the guidance of enlightened intellect, correct observation and well grounded experience, or it will fail to accomplish the great purposes of its Creator. In this way, and in this way alone, is its exercise designed to be a blessed and glorious privilege of humanity. We must not give way to the impulse of the moment and the excitement of our feelings, in administering to the

necessities of our fellow-creatures, more than in performing any other of the highest duties of life. Let us learn, then, to distrust ourselves; let us lean upon each other for support; let us avail ourselves of the opinions, judgment, and experience of all, and thus open the way for improvement in our charities for the future.

The meetings, that have been noticed above, may here be made of essential service; and it certainly would be well that they should continue to be attended, not only by the representatives of those who contribute directly to the supply of the wants of the poor, but also by the directors of Infant Schools, the officers of Societies for providing employment, and all who have opportunities of witnessing, or improving in any way, the effects of our charitable measures. Discussions might then ensue of the highest value; reports might be made, drawn from the widest survey of the several branches of benevolence, and light afforded upon the whole subject, such as individual exertion could never hope to attain. Ground, too, would then be afforded for bringing forward and adopting all plans of a general character, that shall seem calculated to lead to good results. Many such plans have no doubt occurred to all engaged in administering to the wants of the poor, which they have been obliged to abandon, for the plain and simple reason that they could not have carried them on, with any success, without the sympathy and coöperation of all engaged in similar works of charity and relief. It is hoped that the union of the Benevolent Societies, the coming summer, may facilitate the adoption of measures which have hitherto wanted nothing to recommend them but the possibility of putting them in

execution. The earliest opportunity will be taken to bring some of them before the delegates, and to procure the action of the Societies upon them.

Permit us to turn now from this branch of our labors to those more peculiarly deserving our attention.

The services at the Friend Street chapel have been continued the same as mentioned in the last report; and in this part of our labors we have been highly blessed. The evening service each Sabbath has been fully attended, and has presented a most happy spectacle. There are over 200 children connected with the Sunday School, 160 to 170 of whom generally attend; who are instructed by 38 Teachers, with two Superintendents, whose interest and fidelity to those committed to their care during the past winter, deserve great commendation. Aware of the importance of the religious instruction there given, — instruction which most of the recipients would receive no where else, — they have been untiring in their exertions to interest and engage their pupils in holy things. Their efforts have been crowned with success, as is quite apparent in the good order and attention that prevails in the school, and the punctuality and pleasure with which the children attend. The valuable assistance rendered by the Superintendents and Teachers of this school to the Ministers at large, we cannot but acknowledge with gratitude. It encourages us to persevere with them in efforts to promote the happiness and moral welfare of our less favored brethren.

The morning service for the children, which was commenced as an experiment, has far surpassed the expectations of those who proposed it. The attend-

ance, which at first did not exceed 40 or 50 children, has greatly increased, and there are now, generally, from 150 to 200 present. A more interesting sight is seldom presented than this little audience, when engaged in the services of that hour.


So pressing have been our calls at the office, together with the time it has necessarily taken to effect a union of the several Ministers at large and the various Benevolent Societies in this city, that we have been able to give our attention only on the Sabbath to this part of our work. A great field for usefulness is here presented to us, and by what has been done we are convinced that a still greater amount of good may yet be effected, by pointing out to the young the way in which they should go, and by leading those, who are wandering in the paths of ignorance and vice, to a knowledge of that which alone will advance their happiness here and hereafter. Encouraged by the past, we shall spare no effort, therefore, that will promote the great object of this school and chapel, not doubting that He, who has thus far blessed us in our feeble efforts, will strengthen and prepare us for every duty that shall present itself in the great field we are entering.

Dr Tuckerman's absence and Mr Gray's feeble health the two months past, with the many engagements of the winter, have obliged us still to defer opening a chapel at the South End. Those we visit in that part of the city have expressed strong desires to have a place of worship provided for them; and it is hoped that their wishes may be complied with before long. Our experience at Friend Street is, in the meantime, affording us valuable suggestions and preparation for future and similar measures elsewhere.

The Sunday School in Hollis Street has been very full the last six months, presenting, at times, an attendance of 226 children. It continues to give promise of leading to highly important results, and of forming, hereafter, the central point of wide and beneficial influence. It still gathers in its classes the rich and the poor together. It has been, and we trust it always will be, most sacredly devoted to the cause of christian truth and love, the promotion of active benevolence, the diffusion of peace and good will among all who are made the subjects of its sway.

We look forward with pleasing anticipation to our future connection with the poor, as their religious teachers and Christian pastors. It is our earnest prayer that God will long continue us in the discharge of such high and holy offices to man. Permit us to express to your Board our thanks for the care and interest you have long shown towards the great mission to which we have been called; and to rejoice with you in the prospect that such care and interest will pass from your body only to descend and expand itself through the whole class of our fellow-christians. — Whatever honor and success shall crown the Ministry at large in future years, the praise must ever rest with you of having laid the foundations of all.

Our friends will be pleased to hear that Dr Tuckerman's health continues to improve in Europe. His return may now soon be expected. Rev. Mr Arnold meets with success in his kindred mission in New York. His first semi-annual report is full of interest. He has 'procured a hall for public worship, and a Sunday School, which he hopes will prove useful auxiliaries to his other labors.



Allow us, through our communication with you, to thank our many known and unknown friends for the assistance they have rendered us. Some gifts have reached us that awakened deep gratitude to our Heavenly Father, and gave us a happy pledge of the sympathy and support we shall always so much need. The Ladies of 'The Sewing circle' have each month rendered us very important aid. Our engagements the past winter having brought a great extent of suffering beneath our notice, and having led us, besides supplying those immediately under our own care, to aid the resources of our associates, in assisting many of the applicants in their districts also, our Poor's Purse account is necessarily at present somewhat in arrears.

Respectfully,

CHARLES F. BARNARD,
FREDERICK T. GRAY.

MAY 9, 1834.

1st Series.

No. 84.

THE
NINTH REPORT
OF THE AMERICAN
UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
WITH THE
PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE ANNUAL MEETING,
MAY 27, 1834.

BOSTON:
CHARLES BOWEN, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.
JUNE, 1834.

Price 6 Cents.

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NINTH ANNIVERSARY.

THE American Unitarian Association celebrated its ninth anniversary on the evening of Tuesday, May 27, 1834. The members met for the transaction of business at half past six o'clock, in the Berry-street Vestry, Hon. Joseph Story, first Vice President, in the chair.

The records of the last annual meeting, and of the several special meetings held during the year, were read. The Treasurer presented the following Statement of Receipts and Expenditures, which was accepted.

BOSTON, MAY 27, 1834.

To the Executive Committee of the }
American Unitarian Association. }

GENTLEMEN — I herewith submit my account as Treasurer of the American Unitarian Association, with a statement of the Receipts and Expenditures for the

year ending this day. The balance of money on hand, exclusive of the fund for the General Agency, is \$1,737 87.

Since the last annual meeting of the Association, a person has been employed to collect the sums subscribed for the General Agency. The unusual scarcity of money and the great depression in business, since the collector has been employed, has prevented the collections from being made as expeditiously as they would have been under more favorable circumstances ; but they have been as great as could reasonably be expected. Of \$5477 subscribed in this City as donations, the sum of \$4457 has been collected ; of \$2132,50, subscribed in this City for the year 1833, the sum of \$1499 has been collected ; of \$1449,19, subscribed elsewhere as donations or as subscriptions for the year 1833, the sum of \$1099,19 has been collected, making the whole amount collected \$7055,19 ; from which has been paid to agents and for sundry incidental expenses \$184,19, leaving a balance on hand of \$6871,05 to the credit of the fund for the support of the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association.

I am respectfully yours, &c.

HENRY RICE.

**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF THE
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, FROM
MAY 29, 1833, TO MAY 28, 1834.**

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 29, 1833,	-	-	1099,90
From Annual Subscribers,	-	-	36,00
“ Auxiliary Societies,	-	-	1342,55
“ Donation,	-	-	5,00
“ Sales of Tracts,	-	-	610,46
“ Several Unitarian Societies, for the support of the Domestic Mission to the poor of the City of Boston,			761,50*
Interest allowed by the Treasurer,	-		54,17
			<hr/> 2809,68
			<hr/> \$3909,58

EXPENDITURES.

Donation to First Unitarian Society in Farm- ington, Me.	-	-	-	25,00
Paid for the support of preaching in Frye- burg, Me.	-	-	-	50,00
			Carried over	<hr/> 75,00

* This amount was thus obtained :

From the Ladies of Federal Street Church,	. . .	\$192
“ “ New South, “	. . .	158
“ “ Brattle Street, “	. . .	100
“ “ Purchase Street, “	. . .	80 50
“ “ West, “	. . .	71
“ “ 12th Congregational,	. . .	66
From King's Chapel Society,	. . .	100
		<hr/> 761 50

	Brought over,	75,00
Paid	Rev. Mr. Peirce, of Trenton, N. J. for Missionary services, - - -	50,00
"	Rev. E. L. Bascom, for preaching at Savannah, Geo. - - -	25,00
"	Rev. John Pierpont, for missionary services in the Western States, -	100,00
"	Rev. Dr. Worcester, for a tract, -	15,00
"	Binding and printing tracts, - -	715,78
"	Charles Bowen, one year's salary as General Agent, - - -	300,00
"	loss on tracts sold, - - -	63,55
"	Incidental expenses, per account ren- dered, - - -	25,38
"	Rev. Dr. Tuckerman, one year's salary as Domestic Missionary, - -	400,00
"	Rev. C. F. Barnard, one year's salary as Domestic Missionary, - -	400,00
		<hr/> 2169,71
	Balance,*	1739,87
	HENRY RICE, <i>Treasurer.</i>	

Boston, May 27, 1834.

BOSTON, MAY 27, 1834. The subscribers have examined the accounts of the Treasurer of the American Unitarian Association, hereto annexed, compared the same with the vouchers, and find them correct, the balance on hand this day being seventeen hundred and thirtynine dollars, eightyseven cents.

THOMAS TARBELL, }
JOHN S. WILLIAMS, } *Auditors.*

* The payment by the Treasurer of a bill for paper of \$680, presented since the date of his Report, has reduced the balance above to \$1059 87.

The Association proceeded to the choice of Officers for the ensuing year. Mr Walker and Mr Young having declined a re-election, thanks were voted them for their past services. The amendment of the Constitution, proposed at the preceding Annual Meeting, was adopted.

At half past seven o'clock, the Association proceeded to the Federal-street Church. Prayers were offered by Rev. Prof. Palfrey, of Cambridge. The Report of the Executive Committee was read by the General Secretary.

NINTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

THE Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association, in presenting their Ninth Annual Report, desire to state distinctly the course which they have been pursuing, and to notice, briefly, some circumstances in the present state of society, which seem favorable to the progress of truth and holiness.

The attention of the Committee has been directed to several distinct objects, all tending, more or less directly, to promote the great purposes for which we are associated. The tract department, during the past year, as during former years, has been a prominent object of attention. The management of this department is attended with many and serious difficulties, the perplexing nature of which can be fully known only to those who have been called to this arduous duty, but which, when distinctly presented to the mind and duly considered, will, it is presumed by the Committee, secure for the

result of their labors a candid and favorable judgment. These difficulties arise principally from the great variety of tastes to be suited and of wants to be met. There are many in the community, who, from a slight acquaintance with our views of divine truth, have become deeply interested in them ; but they are interested, not as believers, but simply as inquirers. They wish to know more of the peculiar character of our views, of the grounds on which they rest, and of their probable tendency. To these points their inquiries are almost wholly directed. Consequently, if a plain, pungent, practical tract — a tract, for example, upon the danger of delay, be put into their hands, it is not adapted to their peculiar state of mind, it does not meet their wants. They will say, ‘this is indeed good, but it does not differ from the exhortations of other classes of Christians. For all denominations insist upon the danger of delay. What we wish,’ they add, ‘is to be made acquainted with the distinctive peculiarities of your system, and the arguments by which it is supported.’ This large, and, in many parts of our land, rapidly increasing class, will read, with interest, only such tracts as give a clear statement and a powerful defence of our views, a full explanation of our principles, and a development of what may seem to be the natural tendencies of our system.

Then there are many in the community of a different class. They have passed the stage of anxiety in regard to opinions, the period of doctrinal inquiry. They have heartily embraced our views, and have become settled in their principles. They now seek for instruction of an entirely different kind. They wish for such tracts as will bring home to their hearts, in full power, the

great truths of the Gospel; such as will give them clear views of the spiritual nature of our religion, and of its adaptation to their own spiritual wants; such as will light up in their hearts the flame of pure devotion, and guide and strengthen them in the cultivation of vital piety and personal holiness; such as will aid them in resisting the power of the worldly influences by which they are surrounded, and point out to them the most judicious modes of benevolent action. It is to these points that their attention is now principally directed. Consequently, if a tract, containing a statement of our doctrines and arguments in their defence, is put into their hands, it is not adapted to their peculiar state of mind, it does not meet their wants. They throw it aside in dissatisfaction, and seek for something practical or devotional. In respect to these two classes, it will be perceived, that the tracts, which alone are read with interest by the one, are the very tracts which will be regarded by the other as not suited to the wants of the community.

And so it is in regard to many particulars. There are the ignorant to be enlightened, the careless to be awakened, the inquiring to be guided, the desponding to be cheered, and the doubting to be confirmed. There are some, who relish nothing but what is plain and scriptural and practical. There are others, in whom pride of literary taste and intellectual power may, perhaps, have gained an ascendancy, whose attention is to be secured only by what is beautiful or profound. — Each of these classes has its peculiar wants, and will be most interested and profited by religious instruction, in a form adapted to meet these wants. But it is too often the case, that each class regards its own taste as

a standard of universal application, and considers that religious instruction which is not suited to this taste, is not adapted to the wants of the community. Here, then, in the vast variety of tastes to be consulted, and of wants to be supplied, is one fruitful source of difficulty.

In addition to this, the circumstance that a pledge is given to the community for the regular periodical appearance of publications, where those, who give the pledge, must depend on others for the power to redeem it, is a source of much difficulty. It will often happen that suitable materials are not seasonably presented, and, consequently, the community must be disappointed as to the regular appearance of their tracts; or such must be issued as can be obtained, and not such as would, under the most favorable circumstances, have been selected.

Such are some of the difficulties, which attend the management of the tract department. Allusion has been made to them, in order to explain the course which has been pursued. The Committee have been desirous of discharging the important trusts committed to them, to the best of their ability. And, as the extensive and constantly increasing circulation of the tracts of the Association in former years, seemed to stamp the seal of public approbation upon the course which had been pursued, the Committee have not thought it best to make any essential alterations in their plan. It has been their endeavor to press on in the course which seemed to be open before them, to send forth as great a variety, to suit as many tastes, and to meet as many wants as they might be able. And if we look back upon the whole series of tracts issued by the *Association*, it will be perceived that there has been a

greater variety than might at first thought have been supposed. The whole number issued is eightytwo. Of these twentyseven are doctrinal, eight are explanatory either of circumstances important to the full understanding of the scriptures or of particular passages, fifteen are practical, thirtytwo are miscellaneous. This classification presents, it must be acknowledged, a great variety of subjects — a variety appropriate to the various wants of the community. It is believed, that there is also an appropriate variety in the style in which the tracts are written — a variety suited to the various tastes of the community.

During the past year the Committee have issued ten new tracts, and the two others necessary to complete the number for the year, will be immediately put to press.* Of these, 50,000 copies have been printed. They have also, as there was a call for it by the public, reprinted 2000 copies of No. 32, making the whole number of copies printed during the year, 52,000. 47,247 copies have been circulated. The circulation of the tracts might, doubtless, be increased, for it is at present subject to some restrictions. We cannot expect persons to purchase our tracts, unless they are interested in our views. But in some parts of our land there are many persons who, through dissatisfaction with the religious instruction around them, have become indifferent to the whole subject. Such persons will not purchase our tracts, but they are willing to receive and read them. In this way, they might, perhaps, be saved from indifference, and worldly-mindedness, and moral ruin. The Com-

* Since the annual meeting these tracts have been printed, and make Nos. 82 and 83 of the first series.

mittee are fully aware, that, in this vicinity, surrounded as we are by a multiplicity of publications upon the subject of religion, we cannot feel the need of tracts, we cannot estimate properly their real value. It is only from individuals who have gone out into the more distant parts of our land, where the friends of our faith are scattered among those who differ from and oppose them, and who have seen the eagerness with which tracts are seized and read and circulated, that we can learn their importance. It is known that, in former years, the religious opinions of almost whole neighborhoods have been changed by the silent and unobserved power of the tract, co-operating with the Bible. It is hoped that the tracts of the past year, in connection with those of former years, are silently working their way. Nay more, it is believed that they have gone abroad, like the small seed borne upon the wind, to be dropped, in some cases at least, in places where the soil is prepared for the reception of them, and where, nourished by divine influences, they will, in due time, spring up and bring forth fruit a hundred fold. Still, as the wants of the community in this respect are various and constantly changing, and can be learned only by mingling freely with the community, the Committee would express the hope that the friends of our faith, who are scattered abroad throughout our land, and who enjoy opportunities of becoming acquainted with the different wants of the community, will in future aid them in their labors, by communicating such information as they may be able to give in regard to the wants of the public, and the adaptation of the tracts which may be issued; and especially that they would aid, by preparing and presenting to the Committee such tracts as may be best suited to their

respective regions. It may be proper, however, to remark, that the Committee have had it in contemplation to make a change in this department, but have reserved this subject for further deliberation.

A second object of attention with the Committee has been the Ministry to the Poor.. Indeed, this ministry, from its very commencement, has been with them a favorite object, not so much on account of its particular benefit to individuals within the narrow sphere in which it operates, as on account of its tendencies to general good. The Committee have regarded themselves as acting not for the local interests of a particular city, but for the best interests of truth and piety throughout the community. And they have looked upon this ministry not merely as serving to relieve the temporal wants and to promote the spiritual improvement of a few degraded individuals, in a particular city, but as affording an example in which a peculiar feature of our religion is carried out into action, and exhibited in such a manner as to arrest attention and excite interest. The gospel is declared to be glad tidings to the poor. Yet, notwithstanding this peculiar feature of our religion, it is the fact, that there are multitudes of poor in our land, who have not the gospel preached to them. By their poverty, in connection with their feelings and with the fashions of society, they are shut out from our houses of worship; they belong to no religious society; they are under the particular care of no Christian minister; they seem to be abandoned by the better portion of the community to influences too powerful for them to withstand, and by which they are consequently borne down to the lowest depths of degradation. The establishment of this ministry was an attempt to carry the benefits of the gospel to this class of

our fellow-men. Had it resulted in nothing more than the relief of the temporal wants, and the promotion of the spiritual improvement of some few individuals of this class, it would have been well worthy of attention. But this is thought by the Committee to be but a very small part of the good effected by this ministry. The Reports of the ministers at large, stating the evils, pointing out the causes, and suggesting the remedies of pauperism, have aroused many of the most powerful minds in our land to reflection upon the subject; they have excited to action, in attempts to rescue the vicious and to make the gospel what it was intended to be, many in other denominations and in other cities. In the city of Boston there are now nine missionaries to the poor, ministers at large, connected with other denominations than our own, and all actively engaged in carrying forward the benevolent design of the gospel. In the city of New York, where a minister at large is supported mostly by the members of the First Unitarian Society, success, as we learn from Mr Arnold's report, attends this good work.

But there is another view in which this subject has presented itself to the minds of the Committee. As we look abroad over our land, we find that the evils, so great in cities, prevail to some extent in towns and villages. In most, if not in all our towns and villages, there are individuals and families sunk in the depths of poverty and the degradation of vice. They are connected with no religious society, the subjects of the official care of no particular clergyman, and the objects of Christian solicitude with but very few of the professed followers of Jesus. It is desirable that every minister of the gospel should not only strive to be able in expounding the word, and faithful

in preaching from house to house, within the limited circle of those who may unite in contributing to his support, but should regard himself as a minister of that gospel, one of whose peculiarities is, that it is glad tidings to the poor; and should feel himself bound to exemplify by his deep interest in the poor and degraded, especially around him, this peculiarity of our religion. It is desirable, too, that every professed follower of Jesus should take a deep interest in this portion of our brethren, and, as far as circumstances may permit, should himself become an actual visiter of the poor. The Committee have thought, therefore, that they should be promoting the interests of truth and piety throughout the community, by spreading abroad, in their series of tracts, the reports of the ministers at large. It is true, that the details of these reports are local in their character, and to those who look only at the details, these may have been uninteresting numbers of the series. But it is equally true that the principles illustrated by these reports are of vast importance and of universal application. And it is still further true, that the force and beauty of any abstract moral or religious principle, are best learned from the details of the manner in which that principle is acted out. It is in this way, that the full force and peculiar beauty of the principles of our holy religion are learned from the local details of the manner in which those principles were acted out by our Saviour, as contained in the reports of his apostles. The Committee have thought, therefore, that to those who look at principles, these numbers will be as interesting as any in the whole series.

Some changes have taken place in the Ministry to the poor during the past year. The Rev. Dr Tuckerman

has been compelled to leave, for a time, the duties so dear to his heart, and in which he has labored with so much success, and is now abroad for the benefit of his health. Mr Charles F. Barnard, from the Theological School at Cambridge, and Mr Frederic T. Gray, of this city, formerly assistants to Dr Tuckerman, have, in his absence, succeeded to his duties. These young men have entered into this cause with their whole hearts, and are devoting to it all their energies. The details of their peculiar plans and of their various labors, either have been laid before the public in their report which has already been printed, or will be in those which may hereafter be issued.

It is now in contemplation to adopt measures, by which the Executive Committee will be relieved from the care of this ministry. The interest excited in a great degree by the reports of the ministers at large, in the moral and religious wants of the poor of the city, has led to a consultation among the friends of benevolent action, as to the best means of relieving these wants. This consultation has resulted in a plan to effect a union of the various churches of our faith in the city, for philanthropic objects, and it is expected that the plan will be carried into operation in the course of the coming season. The Executive Committee will then be free to devote a less divided attention to plans and measures for the spread of pure Christianity, and for the promotion of vital holiness.

A third object of interest and attention with the Committee, has been the General Agency of the Association. It will be remembered, that, at our last Annual Meeting, Rev. Charles C. Sewall, of Danvers, was elected to this office. After mature deliberation upon the subject and for reasons which were regarded as satisfac-

tory, Mr Sewall felt compelled to decline the acceptance of the appointment. The Committee were then called upon to make arrangements for another election. A special meeting of the Association was called, on the evening of the 7th of October. Upon proceeding to the choice, Rev. Bernard Whitman, of Waltham, was unanimously elected. The Secretary communicated to Mr Whitman the result of the meeting, and received in answer, a communication from him, stating his willingness to accept the office to which he had been elected, if the consent of his people could be obtained, but that, on account of the peculiar nature of his connexion with them, he should be unwilling to leave them without their free and full consent. A Sub-Committee was therefore appointed to confer with his society. This Committee urged upon their consideration, the importance of the office of General Agent, and the difficulty of finding men adapted to its peculiar duties. But the result of their application was unsuccessful. Mr Whitman was compelled, through the refusal of his people to consent to his removal, to decline the acceptance of the appointment.

The Committee were therefore again called upon to consult as to a suitable candidate, and to make arrangements for another choice. A special meeting of the Association was called on February 3d. Upon proceeding to the election, it was found that Rev. Jason Whitman, of Saco, Maine, was chosen, who, having received a dismissal from his people, signified to the Committee his acceptance of the office of General Agent or Secretary. Early in April, he repaired to this city, and has since been endeavoring to make himself acquainted with the duties of his office, and the wants of the community. He has attend

ed the Annual Meetings of the Providence Auxiliary Association, the Middlesex County Association, and the Danvers Auxiliary Association. He has also addressed the Watertown Auxiliary Association, and has communicated with clergymen in different parts of our land, in order to ascertain, if possible, the feelings and wishes of the friends of our faith, and the peculiar wants of different parts of the community. He will, therefore, be ready, soon after the annual meeting, to enter more fully upon the duties of his office — to visit the different feeble societies in our land in order to inquire into their wants, to point out to them the sources of strength within themselves, and to give such encouragement and counsel as the respective circumstances of different places may seem to require. He will be prepared to go forth and visit the regular and well organized societies of our faith, when desired so to do, in order to excite in brethren of the same faith greater sympathy with each other, and to greater zeal and activity in the cause of truth and goodness. The questions are often asked, what plans have been formed, and what principles laid down, for the regulation of the duties of the General Secretary? In answer to these questions the Committee would observe, that none but a general plan could be formed, none but general principles could be fixed, while viewing the subject in the abstract. The particular application of these general plans and principles must be such as may be suggested by an acquaintance with the wants of the community, and may vary as these wants become more and more known. It should be remembered, too, that much of the success, as well as much of the comfort and happiness of the General Secretary, will depend upon the

kind counsel, the hearty welcome, the deep sympathy, the fervent prayers, and the cordial coöperation of the friends of our faith throughout the land.

These three subjects, the management of the Tract department, the oversight of the Ministry to the Poor, and the establishment of the General Agency, have been the prominent objects of attention with the Committee during the past year. Having given this statement of their labors, they would now call attention to some circumstances in the present state of society, which seem to be favorable to the progress of truth and holiness.

From the correspondence entered into by the General Secretary, much information has been gained in regard to the views and feelings of our friends, and the state of religion in our churches. From this correspondence a few extracts will be given. A correspondent from Essex County writes: 'I think there has been, of late, an increasing interest in the subject of religion, particularly on the part of the young men. A course of lectures, delivered at their request, on the Evidences of Christianity, has done much to excite and keep alive this interest, and has been followed by the happiest results. There is a spirit of good will and a disposition to coöperate in every good work, growing up in our young men.' A correspondent from Barnstable County writes: 'The state of religion is evidently improving. People feel a deeper interest in its institutions.' A correspondent from Worcester County writes: 'During the last seven years, ten new societies have been formed within the county. Nine of these have settled ministers, and are enjoying constantly the institutions of religion. And in most of these places, I can truly say I have observed a marked

improvement of character. Grey-headed men have been added to the church ; careless men have been reformed, and multitudes of children are in a course of successful instruction, which promises the happiest results. Practical and devotional books are in great demand among us. A correspondent from New Hampshire writes : ' The attention paid to religious institutions and charities, and the deep interest in christian truth in my own parish, is truly encouraging. I find all services, whether of a public or private character, punctually and fully attended, and all means of instruction eagerly embraced.' A correspondent from Connecticut writes : ' In my view, the most encouraging feature in the present aspect of religion, is the growing interest that is so apparent among several of the denominations in moral reform. The temperance and other similar movements are all highly encouraging. I find that, everywhere, they unite the hearts and the hands of those who engage in them without regard to the difference of their creeds.'

Such is the information derived from the correspondence of the General Secretary. The conclusions drawn from this information are confirmed by the free and full conversations, which he has held with many of our friends in his different excursions. And the information gathered, both from correspondence and from conversation, that, in the different churches of our faith, there is an increasing interest in vital religion, a growing attachment to the institutions, a greater regard for the precepts, and a more full manifestation of the spirit of the Gospel, is regarded by the Committee as a circumstance truly encouraging, far more encouraging than any accounts which might be given of the formation of new societies.


For societies may be formed, professing to hold our views of divine truth, while they have none of the spirit which our system requires, the spirit of the Gospel. And consequently we may have the appearance of making rapid progress as a denomination, when there is no sound and healthy religious growth. And we may be disappointed in our expectations by hastily taking courage from this kind of increase. But if we have evidence that those who have embraced our views are becoming more attached to the institutions of religion, and more earnestly engaged in personal religious improvement, less worldly-minded, and more devout, holy and benevolent, we may take courage, we may rejoice, for if even the borders of our denomination should not be extended, the increasing power of truth and holiness would be most truly manifested.

The growing interest among our friends in the great moral and benevolent movements of the day, is regarded by the Committee as another circumstance favorable to the progress of truth and holiness. These movements, or perhaps we should more properly say, the spirit manifested in these movements, seems to indicate the prevalence, in the community, of more correct notions than have heretofore prevailed, in regard to the real nature and the true design of the gospel. It would seem from these that men have learned, that the true way of living to the glory of God is to live for the good of mankind, not merely for their temporal and physical good, but for their moral, spiritual, everlasting good. These movements seem to indicate, too, that men have at length caught something of the spirit of Jesus, who 'came to seek and to save that which was lost.' In times past the treatment

of the vicious and degraded, was such as might arise from viewing the Gospel as a system of defence merely, and not as a system for the rescue of mankind. Those who had fallen victims of vicious indulgence, were too often regarded as in an entirely hopeless condition, and were abandoned to their fate. The exertions put forth, had for their object the defence simply of those still uncontaminated. This indeed 'ought men to have done,' to have guarded carefully those still free from vicious pollution. But they have at length become convinced that they 'ought not to have left the other undone,' and acting under this conviction, they are now going forth to the deliverance of the vicious and the degraded; they are going forth, too, in the true spirit of the Gospel, which looks upon mankind not as divided into tribes, and nations, and sects and parties, but as all children of one common Father, and brethren of one common family. Many of our friends, for awhile, stood aloof from these movements, not because they were not interested in the objects, but because they doubted the expediency of the measures adopted, and feared the tendency and final result of the almost fanatical zeal of many of the leading friends and advocates of these objects. But they have at length felt it to be their duty to step forward, that so they might exert an influence in restraining extravagant and misguided zeal, and might gain from the warmth of others, some addition to their own fervor, and might be the means of preserving a proper balance, and carrying forward steadily and surely these great and glorious designs. An incidental, but somewhat important, advantage, resulting from this increasing interest in the great benevolent movements of the day, is, that it brings men

of different parties and sects, of different creeds and speculations, who had looked with coldness and suspicion upon each other, to act in concert. As they are thus brought together, they learn that they are all moved by the same love for man, and the same regard for the will and the glory of God ; that they are all possessed of the same kind feelings, influenced by the same worthy motives, and governed by the same pure principles. They come to look upon each other with kindlier feelings, and to forget their sectarian differences in their zeal for the great interests of our common religion. It is with gratitude then, that the Committee have observed this growing interest in the benevolent movements of the day. It is with heartfelt joy, that they have noticed it as a circumstance peculiarly favorable to the progress of truth, and of piety.

Still another circumstance which the Committee have regarded as peculiarly favorable to the progress of pure and undefiled religion, is, the increasing interest in good and worthy objects among the young men of our land. It is on the young that the great interests of knowledge, and virtue, and piety, mainly and ultimately depend. Let the middle-aged and the old do what they may, still, if the young do not sympathise and do not coöperate with them, and especially, if the young, by their devotion to the world, to pleasure, and to sinful indulgence, thwart their plans, their exertions will be almost in vain, as to any permanent good results. And, on the contrary, if the young are truly alive to their own best interest, and the best interests of the community, and are actively engaged in the promotion of sound knowledge, enlightened virtue, and fervent piety, the cause of our common reli-



gion must ultimately prevail, how indifferent soever may be their elders. It is then on the young that the great interests which we all have at heart mainly and ultimately depend. And consequently it is to be regarded as a circumstance favorable to the progress of truth and of holiness, that so many of the young men of our land are becoming sensible of the vast responsibilities that are upon them, and are taking an active part in the duties that are before them.

In conclusion, the Committee would say that, as far as their acquaintance with the condition of the churches, or of the land, justifies them in speaking, they entertain the belief that within the last year, just views of religion have spread themselves through wider masses, and gone deeper into the institutions of society than before. Improvement is not only the watch-word, but the active influence of the times. All sects are busy, and while all are growing because the country grows, all feel more or less sensibly the power of those principles which we have been anxious to place upon their true ground of paramount authority to all opinions or speculations of human device. During the last year, as for years previous, and as must be for many years to come, a warfare, unjust alike to opinion and to character, has been waged against us. But so long as we shall be faithful to our principles, — liberty, holiness, love, — we need not fear the issue. Injustice never can overthrow truth, when upheld by piety. If we might trust to outward signs of prosperity, we perceive no reason for discouragement. Houses of worship have been built, ministers settled, and societies gathered. Our distant churches have been confirmed both in the faith and the righteousness of the gospel ;

the cause upon the advancement of which we are associated has been silent and gradual but sure in its progress ; and even while we lament in regard to ourselves that we have done no more, we have great reason for gratitude to God, on account of our condition and prospects. Of the prevalence and progress of our opinions in other countries, the Committee have received little intelligence since the last meeting. On the continent of Europe, in Asia, and at the Cape of Good Hope, there are, as we know, individuals and societies earnest in the maintenance, and zealous for the diffusion of the faith which was taught by the one Mediator between God and man. The ministers of Geneva have contributed by their writings to the instruction of the world. In England political and hereditary circumstances are so interwoven with religious professions, that a system of belief, which rejects with equal frankness the errors of private opinion, and the abuses of a public establishment, will find few open disciples. But abundant evidence has been given, that this system is secretly undermining the authority of prescription, and preparing the way for better things. The most important event in immediate connexion with the spread of our opinions which has occurred within the last year, is the death of the Rajah Rammohun Roy — a man of whose powers of mind, of whose devotion to truth, and of whose fervent philanthropy, we rejoice that the record has been placed upon the pages of the world's history. One of the few truly great men, whose names must live so long as merit can be appreciated, his death has disappointed the hopes of many hearts in distant quarters of the globe. But God's truth does not fall with the men who undertake its defence.

The cause in which we are associated, we verily believe.

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lieve, is the cause of truth, and of God. Nothing then is wanting to its final success, but the faithful, and rightly directed, and persevering efforts of its friends. Let the ministers of our faith be fervent, and zealous, and devoted, speaking the truth distinctly and fearlessly, but in love; let those who are preparing for the holy office of the ministry, imbibe the true spirit of the gospel; let them add to thorough theological attainments, an acquaintance with the wants of the community, and a spirit of self-sacrifice and unreserved devotion to their master; let the professors of our faith feel the vast importance of individual influence, and of private effort; and finally, let the zeal and the exertions of all be crowned with an increasing interest in personal religion, in moral progress, in spiritual perfection, and our cause will, with the divine blessing, prosper. Let every individual exert himself, to the extent of his ability and influence, to give to our private efforts, to our public institutions, to our theological disputes, and to our religious anniversaries, the character not of party bitterness and sectarian zeal, but of christian liberty, and of gospel love — let every individual set before others the irresistible evidence of a devout and holy life, and our cause will, with the blessing of God, finally succeed.

After the reading of the Report, the Chair invited the remarks of such gentlemen present as might be disposed to address the meeting.

REV. ALONZO HILL, of Worcester, moved the acceptance of the Report. He wished, he said, to bear his

testimony to the interest that was felt throughout the country in the prosperity, influence and usefulness of the Association. He had evidence that it had been instrumental in raising up and sustaining many religious societies ; that it had been instrumental in the spread of truth, and in the promotion of piety.

Among the subjects touched upon in the Report, there was one which he desired particularly to notice. He rejoiced that while the poor of the city had been made special objects of attention, by the Association, the poor of the country had not been forgotten. In the present disturbed and divided state of the community, many societies are poor. Formerly the state of things was different. Our fathers, at the first, when they cleared away the forests for agriculture, cleared away places also for their churches, and were constant in their attendance on the services of the sanctuary. Now it is otherwise. The good order of the religious community is disturbed, societies are divided, and many churches are almost deserted. The snow banks block up the doors in the winter, and the long grass grows undisturbed before them in the summer. Our fathers not only supported worship for themselves, but sent religious instruction to the strangers around them, to the natives of the forest. And shall not we do something for the destitute among our own people — those who are bone of our bone, those who agree with us in sentiment, and sympathize with us in feeling? It is a cause for congratulation that this subject has been called up by the Committee in their Report ; that there is a disposition to do something, to do more than has yet been done, for the assistance of these destitute and feeble societies.

But the question will arise, What can be done? In answer, Mr H. said, he would refer to what had already been done by the Evangelical Missionary Society. The operations of this Society have not, indeed, been extensive. But yet, in past years, it has rendered valuable aid to many feeble societies; it has revived the drooping spirits and cheered the desponding hearts of many in our land. It has sent the bread of life to multitudes of hungry souls, and has done much to aid in sustaining the institutions of religion. It deserves to be fostered and sustained by the community. It is to be hoped that this Association may be enabled to go hand in hand with the Evangelical Missionary Society, in strengthening the things which remain.

There is another subject of importance, said Mr H., upon which he would offer a few words. We send out our tracts. This is well. They are doing much good. But we want something more, we want the voice of the living preacher. We want young men of zeal and energy, who will enter with their whole heart and soul into the duties of the profession, and who will address their fellow men with earnestness and power as immortal beings. An impression has gone abroad that liberal preachers are not wanted. It is not so. The wants of the community are far beyond the supply. We are not to judge of the wants of the community by the number of societies that are already organized, and prepared for the settlement and support of a regular ministry. How can we expect societies of our faith to spring up, of themselves, in the midst of opposing views, without having heard our doctrines distinctly set forth? It would be unreasonable. But many, very many in the community

are dissatisfied with the prevailing religious instruction. They are prepared to listen; and it is of the utmost importance that our views be presented to them now, before they become decidedly sceptical, or settle down into absolute indifference. We want then young men of zeal and energy, who will go out into the highways and by-places, proclaiming the glad tidings of the gospel, in their simplicity and purity, with earnestness and power. And let not the difficulty of the task discourage our young men. A brilliant genius and commanding talents are not absolutely necessary. There are qualifications of more importance than genius and talents, and which are within the reach of all. We want men who have imbibed the spirit of their Master; who have something of his devotion to the service of God and the good of man; something of his spirit of self-sacrifice. Let young men of this character go out into the community, and they will find multitudes of attentive hearers; they will soon gather around them those who love the gospel in its simplicity, who value the institutions of religion, and who are willing to make sacrifices for their support.

And, as a means of raising up laborers for this important work, Mr. H. said he would suggest to parents the importance of endeavoring to turn the minds of their children to this subject. Let them, while training up their children in the truths and principles of the gospel, endeavor to impress upon their minds a deep sense of the importance of laboring to spread these truths and principles throughout the community. Let them teach their children to look upon the christian ministry as one of the most important means of promoting the good of

man and the glory of God. In this way they may be instrumental of increasing the number of pious and efficient ministers; in this way they may be instrumental of advancing the cause of christian truth and holiness.

Rev. Mr BROWNSON, of Canton, did not rise to make a speech. He rose because he would avail himself of every opportunity to bear his testimony in favor of the cause supported by this Association, and especially because he would declare his sympathy with the spirit manifested by the Report to which he had listened. He valued liberal Christianity. He thought its cause that of patriotism, morality, and of humanity. He rejoiced in its success.

I approve, said Mr B., the spirit manifested by the Report, because it is not sectarian; and when I say *not sectarian*, I would be understood. I am not one of those who would advocate timidity and indecision. I will speak my honest convictions, comport they with the convictions of my fellow-beings or not; and I would have every one speak boldly, honestly, what he believes, without inquiring with whom he may agree or disagree. I would not, Mr President, have a man conceal his sentiments, nor forbear to support them; but I would have him support them simply as the truth, not as being opposed to the views of others. I dislike polemics. Sects are not as far apart as they imagine. The party most opposed to us, agrees much more nearly with us than we commonly believe. All are aiming at the same thing, have nearly the same spirit. Forms may be different, words and phrases may be diverse, but at bottom there is little difference. Let sects come toge-

ther more frequently, and they will find they have but slight causes for separation. I am one who believes all sects have some truth, and that no one has the whole truth.

Reference has been made to feeble societies. I know, sir, there are many such. I know there is a lamentable indifference manifested towards religious institutions—in some places a contempt for them, and in others a determined opposition to them. But what shall be done? We cannot force those feeble societies to support religious institutions. Why was it that our fathers supported religious institutions? Why did they make such great sacrifices for them? It was because they loved them, because they felt the need of them, and because the ones they established responded to the deep wants of their souls.

Those institutions are not now loved. They do not now answer to the new wants which the progress of mind and the changes of events have produced. Men are not indifferent to them because they are opposed to religion, nor because they are indifferent to religion; but because they feel no need of them; because they do not find that they respond to their wants. They, indeed, want religion, but they want it clothed in some form that will attract their attention, and entwine around it all the strongest, sweetest and holiest of their affections.

This leads me to observe that if we would build up feeble societies, induce men to support religious institutions, we are not to reason with them; we are not to undertake to show them that it is for their interest to support them. Men do not want logic; they do not want arguments; but they want religion should come to them in a


manner, in a form, that at once wins their love, and is responded to from the very bottom of the soul. For this we should labor. We should seek for such religious institutions as the wants of the age, the spirit of the times, demand.

We must also speak to men in the tone of confidence, with authority, with that tone of authority which a heart-felt conviction of the truth of what we utter always gives. We must present men our views as a religion. Hitherto, Unitarianism has been presented to the community as opposed to the prevailing theological notions. The time has come when it should be presented simply as Christianity, as religious truth, as something positive and authoritative in itself, and depending on itself, on its own intrinsic merits alone. Let this be done. Let its truths be told in words that are instinct with life, in tones that will touch the heart and stir up the soul from its very bottom, and the evils of which we complain will no longer exist. Men demand religion, they crave it; let it only come to them in a manner that will meet the deep wants of the soul, and feeble societies will be built up; men will no longer be indifferent to religious institutions, but will be prepared to make any sacrifice their support may demand.

Rev. Mr GAGE, of Nashua, N. H. said :

Mr President,—I would trespass but a few moments upon your patience, and that of this audience, while I allude to one or two of the dangers and duties of Unitarian Christians. There are, sir, in our societies in the country, those who are not, as yet, fully imbued with the pure spirit of Unitarianism. Men who have joined us

merely upon the ground that we are the advocates of free inquiry and religious toleration. They do not approve of the highly denunciatory preaching which they occasionally hear; and with little knowledge of Unitarianism, with little actual acquaintance with its spirit and power, they join our ranks for the reason I have named. They contend for an important principle; and so far as they are conscientiously devoted to the vindication of the rights of conscience, they should be cordially welcomed as fellow laborers with ourselves in the vineyard of our common Lord. Now, sir, it is highly important that we keep their condition in view in our public ministrations; that we do not endeavor to accommodate our views to theirs, in all points; that we aim to present Christianity to their minds in its true character, as a religion of high spiritual and practical power. There is danger, sir, lest, to conciliate a few, we lower the tone of our public ministrations, insist less urgently than we ought upon the pure and elevated morality of the gospel, and thus the impressive moral power of our views be very much impaired. If this be done, it will prove one of the most effectual obstacles to the progress of pure and undefiled religion which the truth ever yet encountered. And such a course would, moreover, be exceedingly unjust to our cause. Pure Unitarianism breathes a high and devoted spirit. It urges the claims of God's holy word in tones of earnestness and power. It is, if I may so speak, the very fountain head whence the waters of salvation are pouring themselves forth in all their divine purity, in all their cleansing and refreshing influence. Pure Unitarianism casts a dark frown upon sin, in whatever form it may appear—aims to purify the very sources of human



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Mr President,—I would trespass but a few moments upon your patience, and that of this audience, while I allude to one or two of the dangers and duties of Unitarian Christians. There are, sir, in our societies in the country, those who are not, as yet, fully imbued with the pure spirit of Unitarianism. Men who have joined us


merely upon the ground that we are the advocates of free inquiry and religious toleration. They do not approve of the highly denunciatory preaching which they occasionally hear; and with little knowledge of Unitarianism, with little actual acquaintance with its spirit and power, they join our ranks for the reason I have named. They contend for an important principle; and so far as they are conscientiously devoted to the vindication of the rights of conscience, they should be cordially welcomed as fellow laborers with ourselves in the vineyard of our common Lord. Now, sir, it is highly important that we keep their condition in view in our public ministrations; that we do not endeavor to accommodate our views to theirs, in all points; that we aim to present Christianity to their minds in its true character, as a religion of high spiritual and practical power. There is danger, sir, lest, to conciliate a few, we lower the tone of our public ministrations, insist less urgently than we ought upon the pure and elevated morality of the gospel, and thus the impressive moral power of our views be very much impaired. If this be done, it will prove one of the most effectual obstacles to the progress of pure and undefiled religion which the truth ever yet encountered. And such a course would, moreover, be exceedingly unjust to our cause. Pure Unitarianism breathes a high and devoted spirit. It urges the claims of God's holy word in tones of earnestness and power. It is, if I may so speak, the very fountain head whence the waters of salvation are pouring themselves forth in all their divine purity, in all their cleansing and refreshing influence. Pure Unitarianism casts a dark frown upon sin, in whatever form it may appear — aims to purify the very sources of human

action — to send forth the affections of the heart, after having been sanctified by its power, as so many messengers of mercy and of love, to do good to the whole human family. Unitarianism is not, sir, as its opponents often declare, an easy and low system of faith, which flatters men with the hope of impunity while they continue in sin — which would permit conscience to slumber on the very borders of the grave. Oh, no, sir. And Unitarians are bound — by their love for the Lord Jesus Christ, by their love for the souls of their fellow men, by their regard for the highest interests of the world — they are bound to urge, with deep seriousness and fervor, the solemn teachings of Revelation. It is thus, and thus only, that those who have joined our ranks from the cause which I have named, can be awakened to a full perception of the spiritual excellences and beauties, the high moral influences of our views. It is thus that they may be filled with new spiritual life, nerved with new spiritual strength. It is thus that they may be girded in the whole armor of God — the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit — and thus be enabled to stand firmly on any part of allotted duty, to enter boldly any field of religious effort, and, in every conflict with sin, to come off conquerers and more than conquerers.

I rejoice, sir, that the attention of the Association has been directed to the little bands of Unitarian Christians scattered here and there in our country towns. These little bands are the fruits of that growing spirit of mental freedom, which has already produced important results, and which, guided by discretion, and sanctified, as I believe it often is, by the spirit of God, is destined to gain

new and noble triumphs over ignorance and error. Now, sir, situated as these Christians are, liable to a thousand influences calculated to depress and scatter them, they need encouragement. If they are encouraged, if urged to do all in their power for the cause of pure religion, if they see the hand of sympathy stretched out to aid them, if they hear the voice of encouragement rising to cheer them, they will be filled with new strength, they will cling devotedly to their cause. But if left to struggle alone, if they see their more fortunate brethren taking no interest in their welfare, they will sink into despondency, the ties which bound the little band together will be removed, and they will be scattered. To induce them to persevere, they must see their fellow christians interested in their prosperity, they must be induced to catch and breathe something of that earnest and devoted spirit which filled the breasts of apostles, martyrs and reformers. And when the nucleus has been formed, and the little band has become instinct with pure spiritual life, they will be successful; for God will always bless those who are faithful to his cause, he will always bless those who are faithful to themselves.

I am highly delighted with the Report, and forcibly affected by its urgent recommendation of pure spiritual exertion. We are, sir, called upon to labor, and, if need be, to suffer, in one of the noblest causes in which men were ever called upon to act. We would detach the truth, which is powerful to enlighten, to sanctify and to save the soul, from all mixture with human error, and proclaim it in the ears of our fellow beings, in all its purity and power. We would awaken men from spiritual apathy, from the servitude of sin, and urge them to



aspire to the liberty of the sons of God. We would, if the expression be allowed me, dispel the clouds which have been, for ages, gathering over the face of the sun of righteousness, and cause its glory to be wholly unobscured. We would make religion not a matter of mere outward ornament or show, but of living principle, of permanent interest; awakening the powers of the understanding into vigorous action, giving new life and freshness to the affections of the heart, and throwing a moral lustre over the whole path of life. To accomplish an object so desirable, every Unitarian Christian should consider himself bound to devote his best energies and efforts to this holy end. The circumstances of the times demand, as with a trumpet, all energy and fervor on the part of the friends of Jesus Christ and practical righteousness; and we owe it to our Maker, we owe it to his sacred truth, we owe it to our fellow Christians and ourselves, to give ourselves, with a fervent devotedness of spirit, and purpose, and of life, to the will and the glory of God. We have powerful motives to exertion. The cause of devoted piety, of christian morality, of religious toleration, and of gospel charity, is urgently pleading with us. That our past efforts have not been wholly in vain, is evident from the change already wrought upon the prevalent system of theology, its gradual approaches toward Unitarianism. And to carry the pure and cheering spirit of our views to the hearts of our fellow men, should be with us an object of inspiring interest. Our views, sir, harmonize with the character of God, as recorded in his word and in his works. They produce, in an eminent degree, those precious fruits of holiness on which God, and Christ, and angels and good men delight to gaze. Their strength to

support the soul in life's last trying hour, when the eyes are about to bid farewell to all things visible and earthly, when the body is about to crumble and mingle with its kindred dust, and the spirit is about to return to the God who gave it, its power to support the soul in that solemn season has been triumphantly tested on many a bed of death. And I trust, sir, that multitudes of happy beings are now looking down upon us, from their bright abodes of bliss on high, whose souls, while on earth, were sanctified and made ripe for heaven by the spirit and power of Unitarian Christianity. God grant that its course be onward and upward, that it pass, like a spirit of light and life, from heart to heart. While we live, may we all be devoted to its advancement, may our lives abound in its precious fruits. And when we die, may we be sustained by its cheering and blessed faith, and receive, hereafter, as rewards of our fidelity and exertion, crowns of everlasting righteousness in a better and brighter world.

Rev. Mr SULLIVAN, of Keene, N. H. after some introductory remarks, alluded to the condition of many of the religious societies of New England. They are split and divided, and become feeble and presently extinct. How shall these evils be remedied? It must be done by showing that the moral well-being of the people is the object of our efforts, and not a sectarian influence. It has been sometimes charged upon us that we preach a negative system. It is not so; and let us, by the earnestness, directness and pungency of our appeals, give increasing evidence that it is not so.

Mr S. alluded to the decided and spirited efforts of Unitarians in defence of religious freedom. This is cer-

tainly not a sectarian work ; it embraces and aims at the truest interests and happiness of all. Thus enlarged and philanthropic in their views and spirit are all the operations of the Association, and they ought to commend it to the best affections of all the lovers of mankind.

Dr. FOLLEN, of Cambridge, said he had much satisfaction in the character of the Committee's Report. He rejoiced in the evidence that liberal views were spreading. He rejoiced that while we entertain different views of christian truth from many around us, yet that ours is not a negative system, — that our principles are spiritual and life-giving.

In considering the course pursued by the Committee in conducting the affairs of the Association, he regarded with great satisfaction the attention given to the ministry for the poor. It was a noble charity, and gave evidence that the Association conducted its affairs in a truly christian spirit. When the disciples of John came to Jesus to ask him whether he was indeed 'he that should come,' he enumerated to them the great evidences of the authenticity of his gospel. All these evidences, in the course of time, have ceased to accompany the preaching of Christianity ; all, I say, save one — that *the gospel is preached to the poor*. This characteristic of genuine orthodoxy, the Association have made their own, in spirit and in deed.

The gospel was indeed preached to the poor in former times ; but it was not preached as it is now. Then, the purpose of the preaching was to make men peaceable in their poverty, and submissive and contented under their ignorance, dependence and sufferings. It is not so now.

It is now preached with a view to elevate them, and as a means to do it,—physically, and in an outward and worldly respect, as well as inwardly and spiritually. The aim and tendency of the preaching to the poor now is, to cause them to respect themselves, and to feel that they have power to provide for their own support and defence, and to redeem themselves from the bondage and suffering of poverty, and from ignorance and moral degradation. The manner in which this ministry has been conducted is indeed worthy of all praise. A general sympathy with the privations, wants and peculiar temptations of the poor has been awakened. The rich—that is, all those who exercise the divine privilege of giving—have been led to rejoice in the good done to the poor. Both the rich and the poor have been benefited by this ministry. The brother of low degree has learned to ‘rejoice in that he is exalted,’ in the means afforded him to rise to honest independence in this life, as well as to advance his standing in the moral world, and supply the wants of his spiritual and immortal nature. The rich has been taught to rejoice ‘in that he is made low;’ he has learned to look down upon the eminence, on which wealth and rank have placed him, as low and worthless in comparison with that moral elevation which is equally within the reach of every child of God. The rich have learned to regard the poor as fellow Christians, and to act towards them as brethren. In this judicious and truly christian beneficence of the Association, they have raised to the honor of Christianity and of the simple and sanctifying principles of their own faith, a noble temple, which shall stand, in all its glory, long after these material temples, in which we worship now, shall have decayed and perished.

Mr SWETT, of Boston, said, it was far from his intention when he entered the house, to obtrude any remarks upon the meeting. And he had but a few words to say, though he had brought them from a great distance,—a few words from the South. He had shared with all present the satisfaction with which the able Report had been heard, especially where it mentioned the good effected in New England. But much had been done out of New England. Mr S. observed it had been his lot to pass the last winter in the Southern cities, Charleston, Augusta, and Savannah. When, but a few years since, Unitarianism went forth to this Southern country, a younger brother knocking at their door, asking *only Christian charity*, it was denied! ‘Have we not all one Father?’ Not in their view, for they were unwilling to admit us on this ‘common ground.’ So great, Sir, was the opposition to Liberal Christianity that the clergyman of our persuasion in Charleston, was, for many years, not mentioned among the regular clergy of that city, nor was his church called upon to co-operate in their charities. Such was the estimation in which our views were held at the South, but a few years since.

As to the field for usefulness. Under such disadvantages, contending with such prejudices, one would fear but little could have been effected. On the contrary, much has been effected; much we trust for the welfare of man, and the glory of God. And this from the very nature of our doctrines. Though Unitarianism will do much,—everything to reclaim from sin and amend the sinner, to win souls to God by bringing man to duty, yet has it never been wont to ‘move heaven and earth to make proselytes.’ It did not go to the Southern country, Mr

Chairman, to build up its churches, by pulling down those already established; nor that it might, stealing into their camp, seduce their goodly company from its allegiance. It did not covet, Sir, even the stranger, which was within their gates. It only called aloud to the stragglers, those who were on the outskirts of the camp, those who were *without* the gate. Such was the class which Liberal Christianity would win to her altar. This class is very numerous. The slightest knowledge of our Southern cities, a mere glimpse at them will show how much our doctrines have been needed. There is in each of these cities a large floating population; those who come from the middle interior states with cattle, produce and merchandize. These men are free, alike in their habits and opinions. As for doctrines, they profess none. Many say they have met with no religious system they can adopt; and they regret it, for they feel the want of something they have not. They now seldom enter the House of God, for when they do, too much is exacted from them. They are called upon to believe what shocks their understandings. The unhappy consequence is, that by this numerous, and by no means lowest class, a Sabbath in the Carolinas is spent very differently from the same day in New England.

Again there is another class, comprising men of education and discernment, who have been called hard names because they do not believe enough. That is — *enough for others!* The burthen of most the preaching which these hear is, on the one hand *credulity*, on the other, *condemnation!* Neither alternative was pleasing, and the subject was treated as of old by the ‘most noble Felix’ — indefinitely postponed. One of this class informed

me that for years previous to his knowledge of liberal opinions, he had not been in the habit of attending Church; but had spent his Sabbaths in the woods with his gun and pointers. But he has now learned better things. That knowledge which has confirmed his faith, *without calling upon him to resign his reason*, has influenced his practice. This is by no means a solitary instance, but is taken from a mass of similar facts, only as an illustration. These two classes, Mr Chairman, are very numerous. They are ill at ease with their *want of doctrine*, and their unsettled opinions; and like the Athenians are ever wishing to hear some new thing. These are the men whom our belief must win to the Church. To these our call has been, 'Come and see!' They *have* come, and they *have* seen. The scales have fallen from their eyes, and they have seen us revering the Son of man who lived, suffered, and died, that we might believe, that our faith might become conviction. They have seen us honoring the Son of God, (*whom they had been told we denied*) believing in his resurrection, and hoping humbly to share his triumph. Many have heard us who formerly would hearken to none. They have seen with their eyes, and heard with their ears, and have been converted. Such is the field.

We have seen what Unitarianism *was* at the South. It was not welcomed. Far from it, it was met with scorn, reproach and bitterness. But scorn, reproach and bitterness were not among its weapons of defence. The chief of these has been the soft answer which turneth away wrath. A few years since the South was no Antioch to us, for we were not *there* called Christians. But Truth is mighty, and kindness as mighty. It has been the trial

of the North and South winds upon the traveller. The influence of this kindness has been such, that those of the South have been induced to afford us a corner of the mantle of Christian Charity. Forbearance and liberality have caused many to ask — ‘are these “the pestilent fellows” who, we were informed, had come here to turn our world upside down.’ The answer, though tacitly given, has been, ‘such is *not* their character; nor such the features of the doctrines they profess.’ A short time since we were hardly *admitted*. Now we do not ask admittance, for we are not on sufferance. Sunday Schools, Lyceums, and charitable Associations, now find none more strenuous in action, charitable in heart, and liberal of hand than the Unitarians. Now, instead of fearing that ‘the Star from the East’ will set in night, we trust that many are finding peace and healing in its beams.

This state of things, Mr Chairman, may well give this Association joy; for it is owing, under God, to its Tracts and to its Teachers. Our brethren at the South, are truly grateful for these. New tracts are much less common there, than here. Their press is by no means so prolific. They are not deluged with new pamphlets and magazines. On this account, they are more esteemed by the many there, than by the many here. Very much too of our progress is to be attributed to the character, personal and professional, of the clergymen in Charleston and Augusta. It would, Mr Chairman, be more pleasing to me, than grateful to them, to enlarge upon this point. Truth, to be sure, will in the end prevail. But how much hastened in its advance by meekness, kindness, holiness of living, and christian forbearance! May I not say that these gentlemen are eminently quali-

fied to advance the cause of Christ, in the region which is blessed by their labors, and to honor the name of the Master whom we serve.

Mr S. hoped his obtruding his remarks upon the meeting would be pardoned. But our brethren of the South look up to Unitarians of the North, as to brethren. Not envying us our birthright, but claiming and receiving with gratitude their share of our noble heritage. They are bound to us by a chord which is electric. Our joys are theirs; they sympathise in our sorrows. We should then be wanting alike in justice to them and ourselves, did we not reciprocate their good will, and bid them God-speed.

Rev. JOSEPH ALLEN, of Northborough, offered some remarks on the character of the tracts issued by the association; and while he fully admitted their excellence and adaptation to the wants of a portion of the community, he expressed his deep conviction of the importance of furnishing others of a different character — such as should more fully meet the demands of man's spiritual nature, and such especially as should be better adapted to the wants of the ignorant and the poor. There has been a demand, he admitted, for doctrinal tracts, and it was right that that demand should be promptly met, as it had been. But there was a demand too for tracts of a more serious, practical, devotional character, and such as should be intelligible to the uneducated and less privileged portion of the community. We should preach the gospel to the poor, and we should do this, not only by the living voice, but by means of the silent monitors which we may convey to them in the shape of tracts.

These, he insisted, should be practical rather than doctrinal. There is, he remarked, this striking difference between doctrinal and practical divinity, that when we have once become grounded and settled in the leading articles of our faith, we grow weary and impatient in going over the same ground again and again ; whereas the appetite for the latter, for practical divinity, is never cloyed. Simple, earnest, affectionate appeals to the conscience and the heart, are always welcome — are always read or listened to with interest. They never grow stale by age, nor tedious from repetition. They may contain nothing very original or striking, but they will always have the attractions of novelty. Who is ever weary of reading H. More's beautiful little tract, *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* ? What reader ever lays down without reluctance, and a desire and a purpose to take up again such works as the *Lives of Howard*, and *Oberlin*, and *Felix Neff* ? And as it respects controversial writings, whatever interest they may excite for a time, and however great the good they may accomplish, how soon are they laid aside and forgotten, and how much evil do they often occasion ! The good they do is not unmixed good. To how much bitterness, and wrath, and reviling, may they give birth ! As has been quaintly remarked, *a viper may come forth out of the heat*, engendered by religious controversy. Yes, and the sting of that viper may not always prove as harmless as in the case of the shipwrecked mariner, on the coast of Melita, who, as we read, shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

He earnestly hoped, therefore, that this society would promptly furnish tracts of the kind he had adverted to, such as contained simple, direct, affectionate appeals to

the heart. Let us do thus, and we shall promote not only the interests of the Association, but the great cause of practical religion.

Prof. WARE, Jr. of Cambridge said, that he had been pleased with the tone of the Report, and with the tone of the meeting. It would almost seem as if the speakers had been struck, as he had been, with that sentence in which the object of the association was described as being the promotion of 'liberty, holiness, and love,' and had adopted it as the motto to their remarks. Indeed, it appeared to him that nothing could be more suitable than these three words, for a motto to the Association itself. At present it bears upon its seal the words, *Αληθεια εν Χριστω*; — THE TRUTH IN CHRIST; and what is that Truth, or perhaps he should say, the results of it, but Liberty, Holiness, and Love? since, to promote these among men, it was established, and their promotion is its triumph; — the end of the Gospel, the end of this Association.

It is sometimes alleged, that we are too doctrinal. Perhaps we are too *controversial*; but too *doctrinal* we cannot be. For what are doctrines but principles and truths? and on what but principles and truths, does religion rest, from what else derive its power? What are the facts, promises, threatenings, motives of Christianity, by which it operates to sanctify and save men, but so many doctrines? How are Liberty, Holiness, and Love to prevail except through the energetic operation of the TRUTH? *Sanctify them through thy truth*, said the Saviour; — and what is that truth but religious doctrines? Not the denial of what is false, but the assertion of what is true. Not those half dozen doctrines, about which men have

always been disputing, but those many, various and clear religious verities, about which there has been no consultation. I well remember, said Mr W., on reading the 'Velvet Cushion' at its first appearance many years ago, being struck with the remark respecting Arminians and Calvinists, 'that there are *five points* in which they differ, and *five hundred* in which they agree.' This is true of all disputing sects. They quarrel about one thing, and agree about an hundred; — which hundred, if they were but aware of it, are those which operate on the heart, purify the affections, sanctify the life, and save the soul. We certainly are not to remedy the evils of theological disputation by ceasing to teach and press religious doctrines; but by urging the more strenuously those in which the vital power of religion resides. If we omit to do this, and, for fear of being called too doctrinal, only teach the moral precepts of the gospel, we shall greatly fail of duty and success; for how can these precepts be urged except on principle and through motives? and what are these principles and motives but doctrines? You cannot press an important sentiment on the heart, or take a step toward the formation of a character, without the aid of some truth, that is, some doctrine. After some further illustration of this point, Mr W. insisted that it is the design of this Association, by the promulgation of Truth, to help accomplish the great design of the gospel, and bring about the reign of Liberty, Holiness and Love: — Liberty, by which souls and consciences are made free to think and judge for themselves, responsible only to God; — Holiness, which is the perfection of man, and without which none can see the Lord; — and Love, which prompts to all deeds of phi-

lanthropy, and turns earth into heaven. He then alluded particularly to the benevolent action which had been set forward by the Committee of this body. They had originated and maintained the ministry to the poor, whose importance was so highly appreciated; and he asked leave to offer public thanks to those who had so generously contributed to this object, and to those who had now relieved the committee of the charge of that ministry, and placed it under the superintendence of a new Society. He alluded in this connexion to the labors of Dr Tuckerman, and his present absence in Europe, for the benefit of his health; where he had the happiness of meeting with that remarkable man whose death had been spoken of in the Report — Rammohun Roy; one of the great and good men whose memory shall be held in everlasting remembrance. After a life of beneficence and faith, he has gone to his reward. His body reposes in a beautiful spot, very similar to our own Mount Auburn; where his tomb will be a place of pilgrimage to many believing and pious souls.

- Rev. Mr WHITMAN, of Billerica, rose, he said, not to make a speech, but simply to respond to the sentiments of that part of the Report which alludes to the activity of the young men in all that is noble and praiseworthy. He hailed this as an omen of good. He would express to the young his hearty approbation of the course they were pursuing. While it is on them that the important interests of society mainly depend, as suggested in the Report, so it is more peculiarly a matter of importance to them that these interests should be sustained. The old and the middle-aged will soon pass from earthly

scenes and earthly labors. Should irreligion prevail, they will soon escape from its evils. Not so with the young. A long life may be before them. It is then a question of importance to them, whether that life shall be spent in the enjoyment of the institutions of the gospel, or in the midst of vice and irreligion. While then we rejoice in the activity of our young men, let us cheer them in their onward course, by our cordial approbation and heartfelt sympathy.

After Mr W. had closed his remarks, the vote was taken in regard to the Report, which was unanimously accepted — and the meeting was closed by singing the usual doxology.

OFFICERS
OF THE
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1835 — 36.

PRESIDENT.

Rev. AARON BANCROFT, D. D., of Worcester, Mass.

VICE PRESIDENTS.

HON. JOSEPH STORY, Mass.

" JOSEPH LYMAN, "

" WILLIAM SULLIVAN, "

" CHARLES H. ATHERTON, N. H.

" STEPHEN LONGFELLOW, Me.

HENRY WHEATON, Esq. N. Y.

JAMES TAYLOR, Esq. Penn.

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HON. SAMUEL S. WILDE, Mass.

" SAMUEL HOAR, Jr. "

TIMOTHY FLINT, Esq. N. Y.

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" EZRA S. GANNETT.

" GEORGE RIPLEY.

Rev. JASON WHITMAN, *General Secretary.*

" SAMUEL BARRETT, *Assistant Secretary.*

HENRY RICE, Esq. *Treasurer.*

CONSTITUTION
OF THE
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1. The name of this Association shall be **THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.**

2. The objects of this Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country.

3. Unitarian Christians throughout the United States shall be invited to unite and co-operate with this Association.

4. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription shall be paid, and a subscription of \$30 shall constitute a person a member for life.

5. The officers shall be a President, fifteen Vice Presidents, a General Secretary, who shall have the care of all the business and interests of the Association under the control of the Executive Committee, an Assistant Secretary who, in case of the absence or sickness of the General Secretary, shall perform such duties of a Recording and Corresponding Secretary as may require immediate attention, a Treasurer, and three Directors.

6. The Directors, Secretaries, and Treasurer, shall constitute the Executive Committee, who shall meet once in each month, and shall have the direction of the funds and operations of the Association.

7. An annual meeting shall be held at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall deem advisable, of which due notice shall be given, and at which officers shall be cho-

sen, reports be made, and any other business be transacted, which may come before the Association.

8. The Executive Committee shall have power to fill any vacancies which may occur among the officers between any two annual meetings.

9. Any amendments of this constitution shall be proposed at one annual meeting, and may be accepted at the next anniversary, if two thirds of the members present be in favor of such amendments.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, September 23, 1826, as amended March 18, 1830.

'Resolved, That every member of the Association be entitled to one copy of every tract of the first and second series published by the Association during the year for which his subscription is entered.'

Vote of the Executive Committee, passed January 4, 1826.

'Voted, That no society be recognised as auxiliary to this Association, the terms of subscription to which are less than those required in the Constitution of this Association.'

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, June 20, 1833.

'Voted, That the 4th Article of the Constitution be so construed, that any one who shall pay \$30 for the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association, either at once, or by annual instalments within five years, shall be considered a life member.'

CLERGYMEN MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

THE following Clergymen have been made members for life of the American Unitarian Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

Abbot, Abiel.	Lincoln, Calvin.
Alden, Seth.	*Little, Robert.
Bancroft, Aaron, D. D.	Loring, Bailey.
Barrett, Samuel.	Lothrop, Samuel K.
Bartlett, John.	Motte, Melish I.
Bascom, Ezekiel L.	Nichols, Ichabod, D. D.
Bigelow, Andrew.	Palfrey, John G. Prof.
Brazer, John.	*Parker, Nathan, D. D.
Briggs, Charles.	Parkman, Francis.
Brooks, Charles.	Pierpont, John.
Channing, Wm. E., D. D.	Richardson, Joseph.
Colman, Henry.	Ripley, Ezra, D. D.
Dewey, Orville.	Ripley, George.
Edes, Henry, D. D.	Ripley, Samuel.
Farley, Frederic A.	Robinson, Charles.
Field, Joseph.	Sewall, Charles C.
Flint, Jacob.	Storer, John P. B.
Flint, James, D. D.	Stetson, Caleb.
Fox, Thomas B.	Sullivan, Thomas R.
Furness, Wm. H.	Thayer, Christopher T.
Gannett, Ezra S.	Thompson, James W.
Gannett, Thomas B.	Walker, James.
Greenwood, F. W. P.	Ware, Henry, Jr. Prof.
Hall, Edward B.	Ware, William.
Hamilton, Luther.	Wells, George W.
Howe, Moses.	Whitman, Bernard.
Ingersoll, George G.	Whitman, Nathaniel.
Kendall, James, D. D.	Young, Alexander.
Lamson, Alvan.	

* Dead.

OTHER MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

Abbott, Samuel.	Cobb, Elijah.
Adams, Abel.	Coffin, George W.
Adams, Benjamin T.	Coolidge, Joseph.
Adams, James, Jr.	Curtis, Joseph.
Adams, Philip.	Cushing, J. P.
Alger, Cyrus.	Dascomb, T. R.
Alger, Francis.	Dana, Dexter.
Ames, David W.	Davis, Charles S.
Andrews, Ebenezer T.	Danforth, Isaac.
Aspinwall, Samuel.	Davis, James.
Atherton, Charles H.	Davis, James, Jr.
Ball, S. S.	Denny, Daniel.
Barrett, Nathaniel A.	Dorr, Samuel.
Baker, Henry F.	Dorr, John.
Bird, John H.	Dwight, Jonathan.
Blanchard, Hezekiah.	Dwight, William.
Bliss, George.	Dwight George.
Bliss, Mrs B. D.	Eager, William.
Bradlee, Joseph P	Edwards, Elisha.
Bracket, Samuel E.	Ellis, David.
Brewster, Miss A.	Ellis, Jonathan, Jr.
Brooks, Peter C.	Emerson, George B.
Bond, George.	Emmons, John L.
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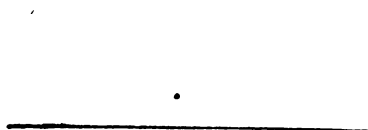
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CHRIST

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IMAGE OF GOD.

HE, and he alone, who fully comprehends the character of Christ, has attained a true conception of God. 'If ye had known me,' said the Saviour, 'ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.'

Our blessed Lord has given, in himself, a Revelation embodying clearer and juster views of the Divine Being, than had ever been formed previously to his coming. The ancient Pagans, in all their wisdom, knew not God. They had but vague and shadowy ideas of his perfections. We are indebted for the sublime descriptions of Him with which we occasionally meet in their writings, less to the energy of their faith than to the affluence of their imagination. Their representations were not so much copies of sentiment that had a real existence in their hearts, as creations of a fancy that loved to see the grandeur and beauty of its own work. How much soever we may admire their genius, their learning, their skill in the arts, and the extent of their philosophical re-



searches, we are constrained to believe that in their ideas of the Great Author of all things, so far as these were fixed and operative, they fell below the most humble and unlettered of the disciples of Christ.

Nor will it be denied that the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Hebrew Church, although in constant communication with the Deity, and familiar with the most glorious manifestations of his presence, misconceived, or rather failed to conceive, in several particulars, His true character. His spirituality was, in their view, but little different from a subtile and refined form of matter. They worshipped Him as the God of their nation only, but not of the Universe. They rarely, if ever, thought of Him in the tender and touching relation of a Father.

No one who reflects at all can dispute the importance of knowing God. For the knowledge of Him is the basis of all correct reasoning either in regard to His dispensations or our destiny. We cannot advance a single step without it towards any rational conclusion, relating either to the design of our existence, the trials of our lot, or the condition that awaits us. From the capacities of the soul we indeed infer its immortality : but the argument begins and proceeds on the supposition of the power and goodness of God. So, from the Infinite wisdom of God, we reason to the suitableness of His dispensations to promote the general happiness of His creatures ; and from his boundless mercy, to the care he will take of us in all time to come. Now, if we err in conceiving Him to be infinite in power, and wisdom, and goodness, it is plain that our conclusions from these premises must be mere fallacies. 'To know Thee,' says the wisdom of Solomon, 'is perfect righteousness ; yea, to know thy power is the root of immortality.'

To enlighten us on a subject so intimately connected with our well-being and happiness, Jesus Christ was qualified and commissioned of the Father. He came into the world professing to be its Light, and to be able to show his followers the true God. 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'

There are three ways in which he has accomplished this object. By direct teaching, by implications in his discourses, and by *his own character, his own visible conduct and example*. He was the Image of the Invisible God, the Representative of the Infinite and Eternal Mind. We shall endeavor in these pages to develop this view of his character.

What strikes us first and most obviously, in considering the life of the Saviour, is the astonishing power which he possessed and manifested. It was almost literally true that whatever the Father had done, the Son did likewise. At one time, we find him, by a word, quieting the rage of the sea, and walking upon its billows, as firmly as though they had been a pavement of marble; at another, filling the appetite of many thousands gathered to hear him, with a few loaves and fishes; again pouring the sweet light upon eyes that had never seen, opening ears that had been sealed from their creation, and loosing tongues that had been bound with the spell of perpetual silence; and yet again, bidding the departed reason reassume her throne, and bodies, slumbering in the graves, awake and come forth from their dark chambers.

You will observe that this supernatural power of Jesus, in the exercise of which, as we maintain, he represented the Deity, was always used in a spirit of kindness and

mercy — was always guided by benevolence. It was not put forth to blast, and wound, and destroy, but to quicken, and heal, and restore. In no instance did Jesus exert his miraculous power to take revenge on his enemies, and in no instance was it exerted to produce or increase human wretchedness. Nor was it ever used as a means of exciting a dread of his person or terror in the minds of those who witnessed its effects ; nor yet for the sake of showing its greatness and extent, and making men marvel.

Examine every action in the history of the Saviour, and you will not find one in which his power was employed for any of the purposes we have named. On the contrary, when tempted to make an ostentatious display of his power by casting himself down, unhurt, from the pinnacle of the temple, the temptation was instantly resisted and overcome. This would have been an entirely selfish use of his power. And when tempted by hunger to use his miraculous power in transforming stones into bread, this temptation too was instantly suppressed. It was not for such a purpose that his power had been given him.

Do you ask, why he was thus scrupulous in the use of his miraculous power, why it was always directed by a beneficent purpose, why it was never made the instrument of selfishness or vindictive rage ? We answer, because by his use of that power, by his own mighty acts of beneficence, it was his office to illustrate and exemplify the Infinite Benevolence of the God who sent him. The moment he had consented to wield the arm of his might merely for his personal safety or interest, or for any purpose other than one of benevolence, that moment

he would have ceased to be the Express Image, the True Representative of the Father. Whatever he did was done like God. He acted as God would have acted. He spake as God would have spoken. His thoughts were the thoughts of God. His will was the will of God. His commandments were the law of God. 'For, he was the brightness of the Everlasting Light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness.'

Inquire in the next place, what was the *feeling* which the Saviour uniformly manifested towards the human race. Was it a feeling of kindness and affection, of unwearied and invincible love, or of displeasure, contempt, and hatred? Did he conduct towards them as though he felt the strong yearnings of a brother's heart for their welfare, or as though he were willing that they should perish in their sins and misery? Did he weep in pity when he foresaw the wretchedness which was to fall upon the Holy City of the Temple, the Hebrew's dearest refuge and last hope, or did he exult in the prospect of the overthrow and destruction of those who had rejected and despised and were about to crucify him? The heathen, in his ignorance and sin, was he willing to restore him to the knowledge and worship of the true God, to the practice of virtue, and to the happiness of truth and piety, or did he prefer that he should remain in his darkness, and continue to do homage to his poor idols, and bury himself in the follies, absurdities, and mysteries of a false religion? Did he show forbearance and gentleness towards men, and patience under the insults which they heaped upon him, or implacable anger that his commandments were disregarded, his counsels set at nought, and *his person despised*?

These questions need only be asked, to bring their true answers at once to every ingenuous mind. But the inference is that on which we dwell with unspeakable satisfaction and delight ; namely, that whatever were the feelings the Saviour manifested in regard to mankind, he manifested to a degree the attributes of the Eternal God, of his Father and our Father. If, for example, he discovered a peculiar abhorrence of certain sins, as pride, hypocrisy, or worldly mindedness, we may *know* thereby that those sins are peculiarly abhorrent to the Divine Being. If he uniformly exhibited a placable disposition, a readiness to pardon the penitent, we may *know* thereby that God is placable and forgiving. If he showed kindness and mercy to those who were hostile to him and in array against his cause, we may *know* thereby that God bears loving kindness even towards such as love him not. 'For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'

From this view of the character and office of Christ might be deduced a strong argument in favor of the truth of Christianity. By comparing what he *taught* concerning the Supreme Being with his own *character* as the Image or Representative of the attributes of God, we should find a complete and strict agreement, such as no mere philosopher or moralist by the force of his talents or ingenuity could possibly have presented. We should find not merely the correspondence which we might expect between his teaching and his character as an inspired Teacher, as one claiming to be the reformer and Saviour of the world, and an example for man in all the trials and duties of life, but as one acting, at the same time, in the stead of God, representing him, giving an exhibition of his perfections.

You find him teaching that God is the Father of all men. Look at him and you will see him professing and evincing for all men paternal tenderness and affection. You find him teaching that God is good to all, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust. Follow him, and you will see publicans and sinners in the train of his benefits, the tidings of salvation published to a world lying in wickedness, not the righteous but sinners called to repentance. You find him teaching that God listens to our entreaties and is ever ready to supply our wants. When was he ever known to turn away from the cry of distress, to frown on the meanest petitioner for his favor and mercy, to show the slightest apathy to the moral wants of mankind? You find him teaching that God is infinitely pure and holy. Where do you find a stain on his garment, a spot on his soul, a leaning towards sin, or even the appearance of evil? These correspondences, — and they might be traced much farther, — furnish to our minds, a strong proof of the divine mission of Jesus. His declarations concerning himself, his doctrine, and his character are in perfect keeping. His teaching and his representation of the Father in his own person, are perfectly harmonious, are strictly one. Does not this stamp the whole as true?

There is, we may add, no light in which the Saviour can be contemplated more honorable to him than that which presents him to us as the image of the Father's perfections. And there is no way by which we can evince greater confidence in him than by studying his character in order to learn that of the Supreme Being. For he is most truly just to the Saviour, and pays him the most acceptable respect, who regards him purely in the

character which he claimed ; whose conceptions of him neither fall below nor rise above his real elevation.

The man would be considered as beside himself, who on viewing a beautiful and finished portrait, however striking the resemblance might be, should believe, and persist in maintaining, that it was not a picture, but real flesh and blood. Now, if we may use the figure without appearing to our readers irreverent, we regard Jesus Christ as the picture of God ; executed by his hand ; perfect in every part ; not seeming to breathe like the canvas of some human master, but breathing ; not seeming as if burning with a God-like love and just ready to open his lips with the words of eternal life, but really filled and fired with the benevolence of his original, and speaking in words by him inspired of Man and Providence and Heaven. In him we see bodied forth in inimitable beauty and perfection whatever is great and glorious and good in God. Gazing on the picture, so striking, so august, so divine, we are insensibly prostrated in adoration of the Infinite One whom it represents, and all that is within us, in harmony of worship, ascribe ' blessing and wisdom and honor and power ' to the Father of Jesus Christ our Lord !

There is in the hearts of many good Christians, as is very well known, a continual and perplexing fear that they may fail of rendering to the Saviour that measure of homage and honor which is his due. We greatly respect this fear. It indicates a mind regardful of duty, impressed with a love of justice, anxious to answer, in trust and gratitude, the claims of condescending and unmerited kindness.

But it must not be forgotten, that this fear proceeds from the same cause which gave rise, in remote antiquity,

to the idolatrous custom of paying divine honors to wise princes, illustrious benefactors, and distinguished statesmen and warriors. The fear of being chargeable with ingratitude which has led some Christians so to interpret the scriptures as to justify their worship of the Son as the Infinite God, the Express Image as the Unchangeable Original, has reared many a statue to human weakness, and consecrated many a shrine to human folly and crime, and wrung many a sacrifice from human superstition. The same principle which has elevated the Holy Virgin to an object of worship, and canonized saints and martyrs, has attributed supreme divinity to the Redeemer of the world.

We most cheerfully accord to the Son of God all the dignity, all the excellence, all the perfection which we think the Gospel accords to him. We can scarcely set a limit to the gratitude and love which we owe to him. The debt is exceeded only by that which we owe to Him who 'so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.' We honor him as one who bore the nearest resemblance that a created and dependant being can bear to the Great Creator. We honor him as one in whose character was portrayed a full likeness of the moral nature of God. We honor him as one who showed in all he did that his soul was enlarged with the benevolence of God, and in all his intercourse with men, represented visibly the disposition and will of the Invisible Father. We honor him as one who 'was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.' We honor him as one whom God 'raised from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places'; far above all principality

and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.' It is the highest idea that we can form of him, and it is certainly the highest he gave of himself, that in him we see God acting; in him we hear God speaking; and in him we feel God inspiring. We look to him not only as the model and prototype of our own character, but as embodying (if we may say so), the character of God, and making it known unto the children of men by making it seen. 'From henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.'

'Go and sin no more,' said Jesus to the broken-hearted woman who had violated the law and was obnoxious to the punishment of death, — Go, and sin no more! Words of more than human clemency! Benevolence unearthly, divine! And in it we see what gives us unspeakable delight, a counterpart to the boundless clemency and benevolence of the Supreme Being! To that single act of transcendant mercy the penitent sinner may cling when all other holds of his hope are broken.

We have, then, Christianity, so far as it relates to the character of God, not simply in the teachings, the records of the discourses of the Saviour, but also, and in equal fulness, in the acts of the Saviour's life. So that when he came upon the earth, if he had only announced himself as the Image of God, and had proved the divinity of his mission as he did prove it, and had lived the life which he did live, and had left behind him no record except of the acts of that life, — none of his discourses, none of the writings of his Apostles, — we should even then have had a Revelation compared with which Natural Religion and Judaism had been as the night to the day.

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THE
PHILOSOPHY
OF
MAN'S SPIRITUAL NATURE
IN REGARD TO THE
FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH.

BY JAMES WALKER.

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FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH.

FAITH, in the sense in which I propose to use that term in the following pages, is defined in Scripture as being 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' By it we can and do regard many things, which lie beyond the sphere of our senses and actual experience, as really existing, and are affected by them as realities. By it the spiritually minded of all religious persuasions, in proportion as they are spiritually minded, feel a confidence and practical assurance in the existence and reality of the spiritual world. It is this principle which constitutes man, unlike the inferior animals, a religious being ; and it is by a right developement of this principle that we become capable of seeing Him who is invisible, of being affected by those things which pertain to our inward and spiritual life as if addressed to the senses, and of holding free, intimate, and habitual communion with the Unseen, the Infinite, and the Eternal.

Now it is remarkable of the infidelity of the present day, that it strikes at the very existence of this principle, considered as an element or property of the human soul. Not content with disputing in detail the evidences of natural and revealed religion, or driven, perhaps, from this ground, it thinks to cut the matter short by denying that man has any faculties for the apprehension of spiritual existences, or of any existences but such as are cognizable by the senses, and so far as they are cognizable by the senses. I have no fears that many amongst us, or that any who are accustomed to contemplate and study the workings of their moral and spiritual nature, will be seduced and carried away by this gross form of sensualism ; which they must feel and know to be contradicted and entirely set aside by the facts of their own inward experience. Still it may be well, in connexion with the evidences of Christianity, to begin by setting forth, in the simplest and clearest language of which the subject is susceptible, the true philosophy of man's moral and spiritual nature in regard to the foundations of faith.

In the present discourse I shall endeavor to establish, illustrate, and enforce, as much at length as my limits will permit, the three following propositions :

First, that a little reflection will convince every one, alive to noble thoughts and sentiments, that the *existence* of those spiritual faculties and capacities, which are assumed as the *foundation* of religion in the soul of man, is attested and put beyond controversy, by the *revelations of consciousness*.

Secondly, that *religion in the soul*, consisting as it does of a manifestation and developement of these spiritual faculties and capacities, is as much *a reality in itself*,

and enters as essentially into our idea of a perfect man, as the corresponding manifestation and developement of the reasoning faculties, a sense of justice, or the affections of sympathy and benevolence.

And *thirdly*, that, from the acknowledged existence and reality of spiritual impressions or perceptions, we may and do assume *the existence and reality of the spiritual world*; just as, from the acknowledged existence and reality of sensible impressions or perceptions, we may and do assume the existence and realities of the sensible world.

These three propositions being established, it will follow, that our conviction of the existence and reality of the spiritual world is resolvable into the same *fundamental law of belief*, as that on which our conviction of the existence and reality of the sensible world depends.

I. My first proposition is, that a little reflection will convince every one, alive to noble thoughts and sentiments, that the *existence* of those spiritual faculties and capacities, which are assumed as the *foundation* of religion in the soul of man, is attested and put beyond controversy by the *revelations of consciousness*.

Some writers contend for the existence of an unbroken chain of beings starting from the lowest form of inorganic matter, and mounting upwards by regular and insensible gradations to the highest order of created intelligences. Others insist on a division of substances into material and immaterial, and make one of the principal arguments for the soul's spirituality and immortality to depend on the nature of its substance, and not on the nature of the laws and conditions imposed upon it. Happily neither of these questions is necessarily implicated in the views I am about to offer, and both may therefore be dismissed a t

once from the discussion ; the former as being a little too fanciful, and the latter as being a little too metaphysical for the generality of minds. It is enough if persons will recognise the obvious fact, that, in the ascending scale of being, as the vegetable manifests some properties which do not belong to crude and inert matter, and as the animal manifests some properties which do not belong to the mere vegetable, so man, as man, manifests some properties which do not belong to the mere animal. He is subject, it is true, to many of the laws and conditions of crude and inert matter, to many of the laws and conditions of vegetable life, and to many of the laws and conditions of animal life ; but he also has part in a still higher life,—the life of the soul. He brings into the world the elements of a higher life, the life of the soul, the acknowledged phenomena of which can no more be resolved into the laws and conditions of mere sensation, than into those of mere vegetation, or mere gravitation. This higher life, consisting, among other things, of a developement of conscience, the sentiment of veneration, and the idea of the Perfect and the absolute, constitutes the *foundation* of religion in the soul of man, the existence and reality of which is attested, as I hold, and is put beyond controversy, by the revelations of consciousness.

I do not suppose, of course, that the existence of the abovementioned properties or affections of the soul is matter of sensation. I do not suppose that we can see, or hear, or feel, or taste, or smell a mental faculty, a moral sentiment, or an idea. Their existence, supposing them to exist, *could* be revealed to us by consciousness alone ; and by consciousness it *is* revealed to us ; and the evidence of consciousness in a ques-

tion of this nature is final and decisive. It is not a matter of sensation, nor of logic; but of consciousness alone. We are conscious of their existence; and being so, whatever we may say, or however we may argue to the contrary, we cannot, practically speaking, doubt it, even if we would, any more than we can doubt the testimony of the senses. Reflect for one moment. What evidence have you of the existence of your own mind, — of the power of thought, or even of the power, or the fact, of sensation itself, but the evidence of consciousness? Nay, what evidence have you of your own individual being and personality, — that you are yourself and not another, that you are a man and not a horse or a tree, that you are awake and alive, and not asleep or dead, but the evidence of consciousness? None whatever. You can say, 'I am conscious of being what I am;' and that is all you can say. An archangel cannot say any thing more. It is not a matter of sensation, or of argument, but of consciousness alone. If, therefore, you are conscious of possessing not only a sensual and an intellectual, but also a moral and spiritual nature, you have as good evidence for believing that this moral and spiritual nature really exists, and that you possess it, as you have for believing that you exist at all.

'True,' the sensualist may say; 'this does prove the existence of something which we call our moral and spiritual nature; but it does not prove that this *something* belongs to our original constitution, that it has its root and foundation in the soul, that it cannot be resolved into a mere figment of the brain.' And then, in the accustomed vein of this philosophy, he will be likely to urge, 'Your conscience, — what is it? One thing in the child, and another thing in the man; one thing in this

age or country, and another thing in that; here expressly forbidding what there it expressly enjoins. And your sentiment of veneration, — what is it? Today prostrate before sticks and stones, tomorrow adoring the host of heaven; among one people, deifying a virtue, among another, a man, among another, an onion; now manifesting itself under the forms of the grossest superstition, and now breaking out into the excesses of the wildest fanaticism. And your idea of the Absolute and the Perfect, — what is it but an hallucination of the metaphysically mad, — the finite vainly thinking to comprehend the infinite? Do not all these things, therefore, though they exist, or are thought to exist, in the human mind, when a little more carefully examined, look very much like figments of the brain?

How long is the plain, practical good sense of mankind to be abused by a sophistry like this, which owes all its apparent force and pertinency to a sort of logical slight of hand, that, with a quickness making it imperceptible to slow minds, substitutes for the real question at issue, another having nothing to do with the subject? So far as the present discussion is concerned, it matters not whether conscience, as already instructed and educated, always decides correctly, or never decides correctly. I am not contending, as every body must perceive, who is capable of understanding the argument, for the correctness or uniformity of the *decisions* of conscience, a circumstance which must depend, of course, on the nature and degree of instruction and education it has received, but for the *existence* of conscience itself, not as a figment of the brain, but as an element of our moral and spiritual nature. What I maintain is simply this; that every man is born with a moral faculty, or the elements of a moral faculty, which, on being developed, creates

in him the idea of a right and a wrong in human conduct; which leads him to ask the question, 'What is right?' or 'What *ought* I to do?' which summons him before the tribunal of his own soul for judgment on the rectitude of his purposes; which grows up into an habitual sense of personal responsibility, and thus prepares him, as his views are enlarged, to comprehend the moral government of God, and to feel his own responsibility to God, as a moral governor. My reasonings and inferences, therefore, are not affected, one way or another, by the actual state of this or that man's conscience, or by the fact that probably no two consciences can be found which exactly agree. A man's conscience, we must presume, according to the influences under which he has acted, will be more or less excited and developed, and more or less enlightened and educated. Still we hold it to be undeniable that every man has a conscience *to be* excited and developed, enlightened and educated; that in this sense conscience has its root and foundation in the soul, and that man, herein, differs essentially from the most sagacious of the inferior animals, and, unlike them, was originally constituted *susceptible* of religion.

And so, too, of the sentiment of veneration or devotion, considered as an original and fundamental propensity of the human mind, I care not, so far as my present purpose is concerned, under what forms it has manifested itself, or to what excesses or abuses it has led. These very excesses and abuses only serve to demonstrate the existence and strength of the principle itself, as they evince such a craving of our nature for religion, that it will accept of any, even the crudest and most debasing, rather *than have none*. Could this be, if we were not

made to be religious? No matter what may be the immediate or ostensible object of this sentiment, — a log, a stone, or a star, the god of the hills, or the god of the plains, 'Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,' — still it is veneration, still it is devotion. Neither can the principle itself, by any show of evidence or just analysis, be resolved into a mere figment of the brain, or a mere creature of circumstances, for, in some form or other, it has manifested itself under all circumstances, and in every stage of the mind's growth, as having its root and foundation in the soul. The sentiment may be, and often has been, misdirected and perverted; but there is the sentiment still, with nothing to hinder its being excited, developed, and directed aright, and the result is religion. There is the sentiment disposing man to look upward to a higher power, and inducing faith in the invisible; a quality in which the most sagacious of the inferior animals do not share in the smallest degree, and which proves, if final causes prove any thing, that man was made for worship and adoration.

One word more respecting our capacity to form an idea of the Absolute and the Perfect. The shallow and flip-pant jeer, that it is the finite vainly thinking to comprehend the infinite, comes from substituting the literal sense of the term *comprehend*, as applied to bodies, for its figurative sense as applied to minds; making the comprehension of an idea to resemble the grasping or embracing of a globe with the hands or the arms. Besides, we need not say that man can, strictly speaking, *comprehend* the Absolute and the Perfect, but only that he can *apprehend* them, as really existing; and there is this difference between the literal import of apprehension and a *full comprehension*, that one can lay hold of what he

would not think to be able at once to clasp. However this may be, it is certain that the idea of the Infinite grows up in the human mind, as it is cultivated and expanded, and becomes an essential condition of thought. As a proof of this, let any one try, and see if he can separate the idea of infinity from his idea of space and duration; or, in other words, whether he can possibly conceive of mere space, or mere duration as otherwise than infinitely extended. Moreover, the very idea of imperfection, as such, involves at least some faint glimmering of an idea of the Perfect, with which it is compared, and without which imperfection would be to us as perfection. In other words, if we had no idea of perfection, we could have no idea of its absence, which is what we mean by imperfection. So likewise in contemplating things accidental and dependent, the idea of the Absolute grows up in the mind; — the idea of something that is *not* accidental and dependent, and on which every thing that is accidental and dependent leans and is sustained. In short, the mind of man is so constituted, that, in the full developement of its intellectual powers, it can find no real satisfaction, no resolution of its doubts and difficulties, but in the idea of the Absolute and the Perfect. Take away this idea, and existence itself becomes an enigma, a meaningless and objectless phantasm. Give us back this idea, and it again becomes a consistent, intelligible, and magnificent whole. Man, unlike the most sagacious of the inferior animals, is so constituted, that this reaching after the Absolute and the Perfect enters into and forms an essential element of his moral and spiritual nature, giving him not only a capacity but a predisposition for that faith which is ‘the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.’

Therefore do we say, and say confidently, that a foundation for religion is laid in the soul of man, the existence whereof is attested and put beyond controversy by the revelations of consciousness. This is my first proposition, and I have only to add in respect to it two brief suggestions. If, as we have seen, a foundation for religion is laid in the soul of man, can we bring ourselves to believe for one moment, that it is laid there for nothing? And again, if, as we have seen, a foundation for a higher life than that of the senses is laid in the soul of man, must it not be accounted a sort of insanity in us, to say nothing of its sinfulness, to refuse or neglect to build upon it?

II. Here my second proposition comes in, which asserts that *religion in the soul*, consisting as it does of a manifestation and developement of our spiritual faculties and capacities, is as much *a reality in itself, and enters as essentially into the idea of a perfect man*, as the corresponding manifestation and developement of the reasoning powers, a sense of justice, or the affections of sympathy and benevolence.

Modern philosophy has revived an important distinction, much insisted on by the old writers, between what is *subjectively* true and real, that is to say, true and real so far as the mind itself is concerned, and what is *objectively* true and real, that is to say, true and real independently of the mind. Thus we affirm of things, the existence of which is reported by the senses, that they really exist both subjectively and objectively; that is to say, that the mind is really affected as if they existed, and that, independently of this affection of the mind, the things themselves exist. In other words, we have an idea of the thing really existing in the mind,

and this is subjective truth and reality; and there is also an object answering to that idea really existing *out of* the mind, and this is objective truth and reality. One sense, therefore, there certainly is, in which the most inveterate skeptic must allow that religion has a real and true existence to the really and truly devout. Subjectively it is real and true, whether objectively it is real and true, or not. All must admit that it is true and real so far as the mind itself is concerned, even though it cannot be shown to have existence independently of the mind. It is a habit or disposition of soul, and, in any view of the matter, the habit or disposition truly and really exists. It is a developement of our nature, a developement of character, and, as such, is as true and real as any other developement of nature and character. Even if it feeds on illusions, it is not itself an illusion. Even if, in its springing up, it depends on nothing better than a fancy, a dream, — its growth in the soul, and the fruits of that growth, are realities, — all-important, all-sustaining realities.

I dwell on this distinction, because it is one which the sensualists, from policy or perversity, would fain wink out of sight, making the question at issue to be, Whether religion is, or is not, a mere illusion. This is not the question. Take any view of the matter, take the sensualist's view of the matter, and still it is undeniable that religion itself, as it exists in the soul of the devout, is a reality, as much so as any other habit or disposition of soul, as much so as taste, or conscience, or parental or filial affection; and its effects are as real.

Nor is this all. Religion in the soul enters essentially into our idea of a *perfect man*. Suppose a man perfect

in his limbs, features, and bodily proportions, but entirely destitute of understanding; — would he answer to any body's idea of a perfect man? No. Give him, then, a perfect understanding, but still let him be entirely destitute of moral sensibility, — as dead to sentiment as before he was to thought, — would he answer to any body's idea of a perfect man? No. And why not? Because we mean by a perfect man, one in whom the whole nature of man is developed, in its proper order, and just relations and proportions. Now, as has been demonstrated, a foundation for *religion* is laid in the human soul. In other words, we have spiritual faculties and capacities, as well as intellectual and moral faculties and capacities; and the former constitute a part of our nature as truly as the latter; and this part of our nature must be developed. Otherwise the entire man is not put forth. Part of his nature, and of his higher nature too, it may be said, is yet to be born; and thus it is, that a deep and true philosophy reasserts and confirms the Christian doctrine of regeneration. We are born, at first, into the visible or sensible world; when we become alive to the invisible or spiritual world, we may be said to be born again; and it is not till after this second birth that we become all which, as men, we are capable of becoming. It is not, I repeat it, until after this second birth, consisting, as I have said, in a developement of our spiritual faculties and capacities, that the entire man is revealed, or our idea of a perfect man realized or approached.

Every well constituted mind must be painfully conscious of this truth, though often without being aware of the cause of its uneasiness, in reading the lives, or

contemplating the fame, of men of eminence, and sometimes perhaps of integrity and philanthropy, but destitute of religion. Doubtless a man may have some of the forms of greatness and goodness, without having all; and nothing can be further from my purpose or disposition than to derogate from any form of either, wherever found and however connected. Still, when we behold a manifestation of the lower forms of greatness and goodness without the higher, an impression is left on the mind similar to what is universally felt on seeing a foundation laid for a noble structure, and that structure carried up far enough with the richest materials to indicate the grand and comprehensive plan of the architect, which plan however from some cause has been interrupted and broken off midway.

Thus far have I reasoned, as you will perceive, from what consciousness attests and puts beyond controversy respecting the moral and spiritual nature of man. Waiving the question whether any thing exists *out of* the mind corresponding to our idea of religion *in* the mind,—waiving the question whether the objects of our faith have a true and real existence independently of the mind itself, still the conclusion, as we have seen, is unavoidable, that this faith has its foundation in human nature, that its developement is a true and real developement of our nature, and that it is absolutely essential to our nature's entire and perfect developement. Whether religion exists independently of the mind or not, we know that to those who have it, it has a true and real existence *in the mind*; that it is a source of true and real strength, solace, and hope; and that men, as men, can truly and really do, bear, and enjoy with it, what they could not do, bear, or enjoy without

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it. Even, therefore, if the discussion were to stop here, it would follow incontestably, that to disown or neglect religion because of this or that real or supposed logical difficulty, would be to do violence at the same time to both those instinctive desires, from one or the other of which, it is said, a rational being, as such, must always act, — a desire of happiness and a desire of perfection.

III. But the discussion does not stop here. I maintain, and this is my third and last proposition, that from the acknowledged existence and reality of spiritual impressions or perceptions we may and do assume *the existence and reality of the spiritual world*; just as, from the acknowledged existence and reality of sensible impressions or perceptions, we may and do assume the existence and reality of the sensible world.

Most of you, I presume, are apprised of the extravagances of skepticism into which men have been betrayed by insisting on a *kind* of evidence of which the nature of the case does not admit. Some have denied the existence of the spiritual world; others have denied the existence of the sensible world; and others again have denied the existence of both worlds, contending for that of impressions or perceptions alone. These last, if we are to believe in nothing but the facts of sensation, and what can be *logically* deduced from these facts, are unquestionably the only consistent reasoners. For what logical connexion is there between a fact of sensation, between an impression or perception, and the real existence of its object, or of the mind that is conscious of it? None whatever. I do not mean that a consistent reasoner will hesitate to admit the real existence of the objects of sensation. Practically speaking he cannot help

admitting their real existence, if he would. Every man, woman, and child believes in his or her own existence, and in that of the outward universe or sensible world; but not because the existence of either is susceptible of proof by a process of reasoning. Not the semblance, not the shadow of a sound logical argument can be adduced in proof of our own existence, or that of the outward universe. We believe in the existence of both, it is true; but it is only because we are so constituted as to make it a matter of intuition. Let it be distinctly understood, therefore, that our conviction of the existence of the sensible world does not rest on a logical deduction from the facts of sensation, or of sensation and consciousness. It rests on the constitution of our nature. It is resolvable into a fundamental law of belief. It is held, not as a logical inference, but as a first principle. With the faculties we possess, and in the circumstances in which we are placed, the idea grows up in the mind, and we cannot expel it if we would.

Now the question arises, On what does a devout man's conviction of the existence and reality of the *spiritual world* depend? I answer;—On the very same. He is conscious of spiritual impressions or perceptions, as he also is of sensible impressions or perceptions; but he does not think to demonstrate the existence and reality of the objects of either by a process of reasoning. He does not take the facts of his inward experience, and hold to the existence and reality of the spiritual world as a logical deduction from these facts, but as an intuitive suggestion grounded on these facts. He believes in the existence and reality of the spiritual world, just as he believes in his own existence and reality, and just as he

believes in the existence and reality of the outward universe, — simply and solely because he is so constituted that with his impressions or perceptions he cannot help it. If he could, it would be to begin by assuming it to be possible that his faculties, though in a sound state and rightly circumstanced, may play him false ; and if he could begin by assuming this as barely possible, there would be an end to all certainty. Demonstration itself, ocular or mathematical, would no longer be ground of certainty. It is said that sophistical reasoning has sometimes been resorted to in proof of the existence and reality of the spiritual world ; and this perhaps is true ; but the error has consisted in supposing that any reasoning is necessary. It is not necessary that a devout man's conviction of the existence and reality of the spiritual world should rest on more or on better evidence, than his conviction of the existence and reality of the sensible world ; it is enough that it rests on as much, and on the very same. It is enough that both are resolvable, as I have shown, into the same fundamental law of belief ; and that, in philosophy as well as in fact, this law ought to exclude all doubt in the former case, as well as in the latter.

But how, it may be asked, according to the views here presented, can we account for the fact of such different and conflicting spiritual impressions or perceptions ? If a spiritual world really exists, why do not all men apprehend it alike ? Because, I hardly need reply, it is contemplated under such widely different aspects, and by persons whose spiritual faculties and capacities are variously developed, and, above all, because in spiritual things the best people are so prone to mix up and confound their inferences with their simple perceptions. There is *nothing*, therefore, in the real or apparent diversity of

our spiritual impressions or perceptions, which should shake our confidence in the principle that, to a rightly constituted and fully developed soul, moral and spiritual truth will be revealed with a degree of intuitive clearness and certainty, equal at least to that of the objects of sense. Besides, a like diversity in our views and theories prevails in respect to the material world; but nobody thinks, merely on the strength of this, seriously to raise a doubt whether the material world exists at all. And if it is further urged, that the most spiritual men may sometimes be tempted to say of their religious experience, 'Perhaps it may turn out to be an illusion;' it should be recollected, that this is no more than what they may also, in moments of inquietude and despondency, be tempted to say of *all* their experience. They may say of all their experience, 'Perhaps it may turn out to be an illusion.' At this very moment, when I seem to myself to be writing a discourse on the Christian evidences, how do I know but that really I am in my bed dreaming about it? We may talk in this way, I know, about dreams, illusions, visions; but it is certain that, to a well constituted and well ordered mind, it never has occasioned any real doubt or difficulty, nor ever can, in regard to ordinary life; and for the same reason neither ought it to do so in regard to the life of the soul.

Once more. What, according to the doctrine advocated in these pages, shall we reply to those who may affirm that they never had any of our alleged spiritual impressions or perceptions? Precisely what we should to those who might say that they never had any of our alleged moral impressions or perceptions, any sense of justice, or honor, or disinterested benevolence, or natural

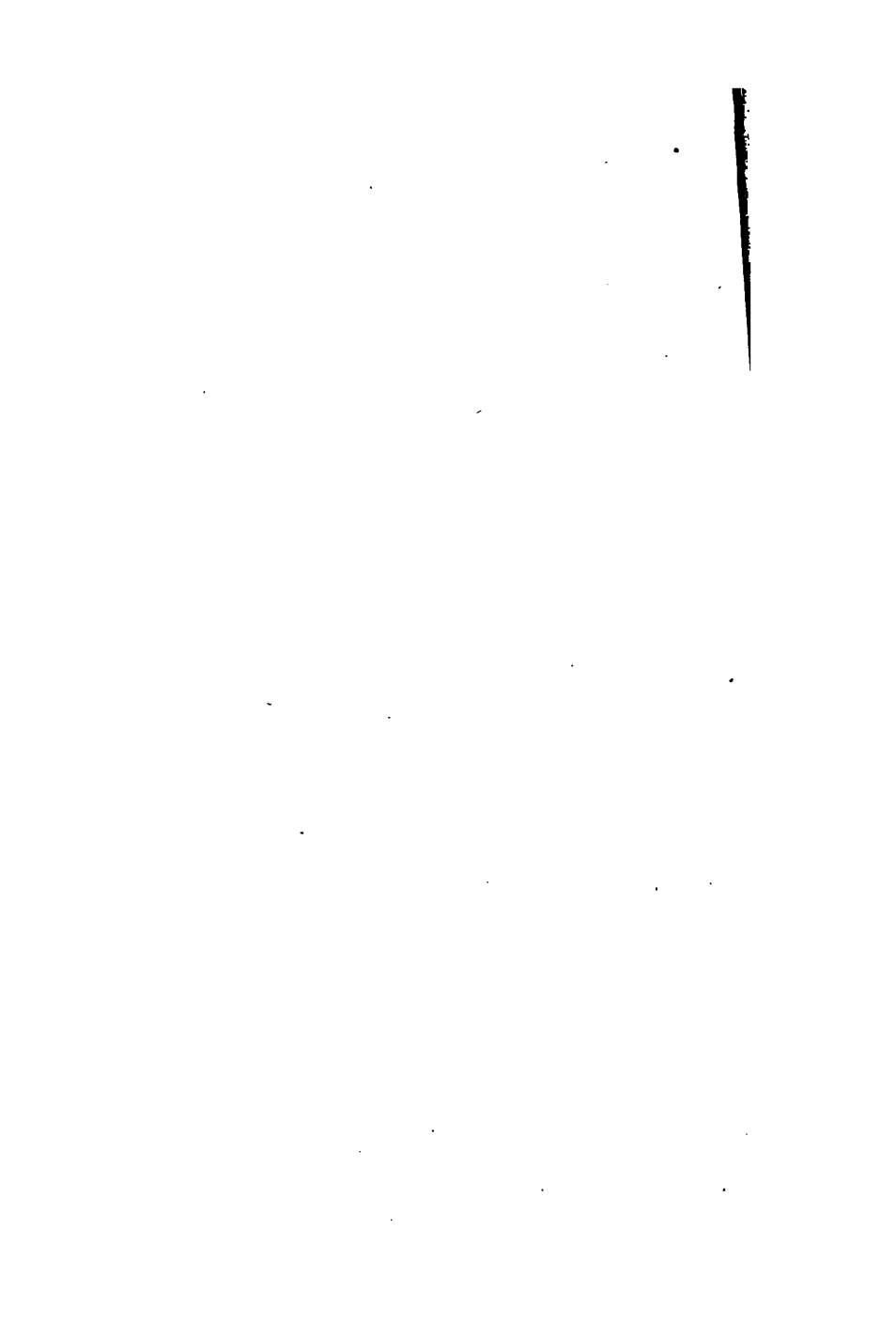
affection. We should reply,—that we are very sorry for it. If, however, along with their skepticism they evince any love of the truth, any desire or willingness to have their doubts dispelled, any tenderness of conscience or of soul, we may reason with them, and not without some prospect of convincing them, that their want of faith is to be ascribed to one or both of the two following causes ; — either to a vicious or defective developement of their nature, or to their insisting on a kind of evidence of which the subject, from its very nature, is not susceptible. Either, from some defect or vice of their peculiar moral constitution or training they are not prepared to appreciate the only appropriate or possible evidence in the case ; or, from ignorance of true philosophy, they require the sort of evidence for truths addressed to one faculty, which is available only in regard to truths addressed to another. By insisting on these topics, it is not improbable, that many apparent Atheists may be reclaimed. ‘ In days of crisis and agitation,’ says an eminent French philosopher, ‘ together with reflection, doubt and skepticism enter into the minds of many excellent men who sigh over and are affrighted at their own incredulity. I would undertake their defence against themselves ; I would prove to them that they always place faith in something. When the scholar has denied the existence of God, hear the man ; ask *him*, take him at unawares, and you will see that all his words imply the idea of God ; and that faith in God is, without his knowledge, at the bottom of his heart.’ *

*Cousin's *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, pp. 179, 180.

As for the rest, the propagandists of atheism, the men who *love* atheism from eccentricity, or misanthropy, or deadness of soul, — I say it with submission, but I say it with the utmost possible confidence in the wisdom of the course, *Let them alone*. Conversion by the ordinary modes of instruction and argument is precluded. Gratify them not with a few short days of that notoriety which they so much covet. Leave them to the natural influences of their system; leave them to the silent disgust which their excesses must awaken in a community not absolutely savage; leave them to the cant and priestcraft of a few ignorant and interested leaders: and it is not perhaps entirely past all hope that, in this way, some of them may be so far reclaimed as to become ashamed of their cause, ashamed of one another, and ashamed of themselves.

Meanwhile, let us hope that a better philosophy than the degrading sensualism, out of which most forms of modern infidelity have grown, will prevail; and that the minds of the rising generation will be thoroughly imbued with it. Let it be a philosophy which recognises the higher nature of man, and aims in a chastened and reverential spirit to unfold the mysteries of his higher life. Let it be a philosophy which comprehends the soul, — a soul susceptible of religion, of the sublime principle of faith, of a faith which ‘entereth into that within the veil.’ Let it be a philosophy which continually reminds us of our intimate relationship to the spiritual world, which opens to us new sources of strength in temptation, new sources of consolation in trouble, and new sources of life in death, — nay, which teaches us that what we call *death* is but the dying of all that is mortal, that nothing

but life may remain. Let it be a philosophy which prepares us to expect extraordinary manifestations of our heavenly Father's love and care, and which harmonizes perfectly with the sublime moral purpose and meaning of the Gospel, 'casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'





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THE

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THE
EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

PART FIRST.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THE Christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer in procuring the favor and help of Almighty God, was one which laid very near the hearts of our ancestors. It was with them for support and guidance, in all their trials in placing the foundations of civil authority and social order in this then new world ; and was as a ' wall of fire ' around them, amidst a thousand evils felt and feared in their daily walk. It has not become obsolete in this more prosperous, but less devotedly religious period. And it is matter of congratulation, that it is, ordinarily, and has been, in an especial manner, on a recent occasion,* recognised in the councils of the government under which we live. Long may it be thus recognised ; and distant,

* An allusion is here made to a Proclamation for a day of Fasting and Prayer by the Governor of Massachusetts, on account of the appearance of the *Cholera* in this section of the Country.

far distant be the day, when it shall, in any measure, lose its hold upon the minds either of the rulers or the people.

But still it is sufficiently obvious that this doctrine is not always, perhaps not generally, well understood ; that it is often mingled with much doubt in the minds of those who professedly receive it ; and that, sometimes, it is referred to in conversation, and even in some few of our public prints, we regret to say, in a tone of flippant remark, which, as a matter of taste merely, as well as in decent respect to other minds, might well be spared ; and which certainly would be spared, were there a better understanding of the subject.

For what doctrine of our religion is important if this be not ? If prayer considered as a ‘ request made known to God,’ have no efficacy in procuring His favor, why do we pray ? Why do we assemble ourselves together on ordinary, or on extraordinary occasions, in our houses of worship, to go through, even so imperfectly as we do, our devotional petitions there ? What dead, empty, and worse than unmeaning forms are these, as it respects ourselves ? What an impious mockery as it respects our God ? Well might the scoffer, the sceptic, the half or no believer, in beholding these religious offerings, adopt the cutting irony of the Prophet towards the idolaters of Baal, and say to us poor deluded worshippers ‘ Cry aloud, for he is a God, either he is talking or pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked,’ since there is none to answer, and none who regardeth our prayers.

And, if our petitions are unheard and unanswered in heaven, what is our reliance, what our hope, in the

gloomy passages of life, when friends sicken or die around us, or we ourselves are overwhelmed by infirmity and distress, or are brought to the grave's brink, and there is no longer support or comfort on the earth? Alas! there is none. 'The dark and fearful way is before us, and we must pursue it alone, 'with no eye to pity, and no hand to save.' Does not the consciousness of many respond to our words, when we say, that there is a privilege in the 'prayer of faith,' in the communion of the trusting heart with God, whose preciousness no language can describe; which is more and better than any or every earthly blessing, and which is sufficient to strengthen and support us in the loss of them all?

It may be proper to explain, at the outset of this inquiry, what we understand by the Efficacy of Prayer. Of its importance, viewed merely as an instrumental duty, as a means of exciting and cherishing devout affections and sentiments, and of aiding us to live a holy life, none can think more highly than we. These are the natural consequences of prayer, that is, those which result from the well-known principles of the human mind, and concerning which there is little difference of opinion. But, by the term Efficacy of Prayer, in these remarks, we would be understood to maintain, *that it is a means of obtaining the specific favor and help of God, both in regard to our spiritual and temporal welfare, which we may not expect to receive without it.*

In the remarks which will follow, we shall attempt, in the first place, to meet and answer those objections against the Christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer, which are thought to be most valid and important; and next advert to some of those facts and arguments, by

which, as we think, a positive belief of the doctrine is fully sustained. In doing this, we are very content to waive all claims to originality. Our aim is far higher. It is to stamp on other minds those convictions respecting this subject, which are inexpressibly dear to our own ; and we shall freely and gladly employ, for this purpose, the best resources at our command.

Our first object, and we wish it should be here kept distinctly in view, is to answer the prominent *Objections*, which are supposed to lie against the doctrine.

One of the objections which is urged against the Efficacy of Prayer, and one, which, it would seem, from the positive and triumphant air with which it is urged, is considered as decisive, is derived from the *Immutability of the laws of nature*, as they are called ; or that connected series of facts or events denominated cause and effect, by which the material universe is governed. It is said that these causes and effects are permanent, that they are modes of operation, by which the order and harmony of the world around us is preserved, and that it is most unphilosophical to think that this settled order can be broken in upon in answer to our prayers. We believe this to be a full and fair statement of the objection.

And now what is its value in opposition to the Christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer ? Nothing, as we apprehend, absolutely nothing at all. And for this reason. All that is or can be claimed for the permanency of the physical laws of the universe, may be granted, and yet the doctrine remain untouched. The constancy of these laws is admitted. It is true, that in the visible creation, certain effects do invariably follow certain causes. They have never been

known to fail, except by a miraculous interposition of the Deity. Night follows day, and day night. The seasons preserve their distinct periods of succession. Cold chills and fire burns. Heavy bodies, if unimpeded, fall to the earth. Water seeks a level. Food nourishes, and the want of it kills. These, and many other causes and effects are permanent. We may not hope to interrupt or suspend their operation by our prayers. No petitions will avail to set them aside. It were superstition, or fanaticism, or madness, to expect, by the most fervent prayers of all the holy spirits who are or who have been on the earth, to interfere with this permanent order of the physical world. And yet, notwithstanding all this, we hold in an undoubting faith, the doctrine of the Efficacy of our Prayers, or, to use the language of another, of 'an influence from above, as diversified and unceasing as are the requests from below.'

But is there nothing irreconcilable between the two doctrines? We answer, no. And here it is that the objection falls pointless to the ground. For if it can be shown or rendered probable, that a provision is made for an answer to our prayers, above and beyond that settled arrangement of causes and effects which we see around us; in other words, that our prayers may have an efficacy *without interfering with this arrangement*; then, it is obvious, that an objection drawn from the permanency of this arrangement, is nothing worth.

Now that such an arrangement may exist, is plain from the fact that we can trace the chain of causes and effects only to a certain distance, and this a very short one. We may see the connexion of one event with another, or rather, to speak more truly and philosophically, we may

see that one event regularly precedes another, and this a third, and this, it may be, a fourth; but we soon arrive at a point, beyond which, nothing further is or can be known. All our investigations and all our philosophy end here. But not so the series of events. The chain of causes and effects, as we call them, is continued on, and on, beyond this point, through unknown gradations, far, far beyond all human ken, until it reaches the cause of causes, the great First Cause. What prevents, then, that God may, by an express act of His omnipotent power, or by putting in operation certain unknown agents, or by giving a peculiar direction to some of these unknown but not less real causes, produce a certain result in answer to our prayers? And is it not plain, further, that this may be done, not only by not interfering with, or interrupting, or suspending the permanency of known causes and effects, *but by using these very causes and effects, as a part of his appointed means in producing this result?* The impulse, by which an event is finally made to take place, in answer to prayer, may be given, not at that part of the series which is within our observation, where such an interference would be miraculous, but at that part of the series, which is without and beyond our observation, without interfering with the permanency of nature, as it is called, in the slightest degree. It is thus a special providence may be established for the peculiar wants of every thing that lives, from the seraph who bows before the unveiled glories of the throne of God, down to the meanest reptile; and thus it is too, that provision may be made for an answer to every prayer. It is thus we may reconcile our belief of this doctrine with the permanency of nature. It is thus our Faith and our Philosophy go hand in hand.

It may be worth while to illustrate these reasonings by an example; and we will take one from the event which led our thoughts particularly to this subject. Is there any objection to the Efficacy of Prayer for health, or preservation from disease, to be founded on the fact that the operations of nature are fixed and uniform? Certainly not, as we maintain, and for the precise reason above stated. The knowledge of those causes, on which health and sickness depend, is very limited. Those who have made this subject a study, will tell you that all their skill is summed up in a knowledge of some facts, fewer or more, but at the greatest extent very limited, which are ordinarily found in connexion with each other, and which, as has been repeatedly said, are hence called cause and effect. He will further tell you, if he is an intelligent man, that above and beyond all these, there are agencies at work, of which he knows nothing; and that of the ultimate, or original cause of sickness or death, he is wholly ignorant. Some of the last steps or stages of the process, which he calls proximate causes, he may know or think he knows, but nothing beyond. In respect, for instance, to that pestilence, to avert which, our people, and, as we think very properly, have been recently called together to unite their prayers, what is known, we do not ask merely of its remote causes, but of its proximate or immediate causes? Certain circumstances, it seems, have been satisfactorily ascertained to predispose to the reception of it; but of the efficient, the producing cause, and of the methods of its propagation, there is great controversy, at least, even among those who profess to know the most concerning it. Now, and this is the point on which we would fasten attention, is

there not room enough amidst these unknown causes of the pestilence, for God to interpose His helping and preserving hand, without interfering with the permanency of the known laws of nature? Suppose these causes to be certain changes, taints or miasms in the atmosphere. They are not palpable. They are not visible. They cannot be analyzed. They defy the chemist's skill. Might they not, then, be altered, arrested, removed by our God, and this, too, if He pleased, in direct answer to our prayers, without interfering with the known laws of nature? Nay, might not this be done, as was before suggested, by the agency of these very laws; by causing any one of the elements to act as an antagonist principle, or as an antidote to this poisonous influence which pervades them; and this, without our knowing that this beneficial agency was thus exerted, except from its beneficial effects? Is there not a vast variety of atmospherical influences thus daily put in motion? Could we desire a better example to show, may we not now call it, the utter futility of the objection against the Efficacy of Prayer, which is derived from the alleged permanency of nature. And do we not see that it is entirely resolvable into narrow views, on the part of the objector, of the providence of God; and that the christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer, is, in fact, coincident with the highest and best philosophy?

We think we may consider this answer to the objection before us, ample and complete. But as it may not strike other minds as it does ours, we proceed to offer, as briefly as possible, another, which we deem equally decisive. It cannot have escaped the observation of any who have given their attention to the subject, that there

are two great classes of events, both in the physical and moral world, which are distinguishable and clearly marked. In the first place, there are those which occur according to a known and established order, which obey what are called the permanent laws of nature; those very laws, which are thought to be broken in upon by the doctrine under remark. But, beside events which thus regularly follow in succession, there is another class, which appear to obey no prescribed law, and to follow no regular order in their occurrence. These are what men call accidents, fortuitous events, the effects of chance or fortune. But what do they mean by these terms? Is it anything but this, that they do not, like the events above referred to, obey any known rule, that is, any rule known to them? But no one who has any just views of a superintending God, can believe they take place without his knowledge and supervision; that, like all other events, they are finally to be traced to Him. Accidents though we call them, and trifling though they may be in themselves, they are yet continually deciding the most momentous interests. All history is full of examples of this fact. Battles are won or lost, thrones set up or overturned; dynasties founded or destroyed, the greatest discoveries made or missed, by circumstances as apparently fortuitous, and sometimes, also, of as little intrinsic importance as the turning of a die. He too, who will look back upon the history of his past life, or of the past year, will find that his fortunes have often turned on similar occurrences. Can we hesitate to admit, then, for a moment, that events like these are under the supervision and direction of Him in whom we live and have our being? If so, it is obvious, and here again we would

ask the especial attention of the reader, that these may be directed in answer to our prayers, without infringing or interrupting any of the known laws of nature, since they are wholly independent of their control. And, as they are thus directly to be ascribed to God, and are thus under His direct agency, and do thus seriously affect the destinies of men, is it irrational to infer, that it is by means of these chances or accidents, as we call them, that God prepares an especial moral discipline for every individual who lives? However this may be, it is plainly evident, and this is all we are now concerned to maintain, that he *may* thus answer the prayers of every individual, without at all deviating from the established course of nature. 'Herein,' as has been well said, 'especially is manifested the perfection of the Divine wisdom, that the most surprising conjunctions of events are brought about by the simplest means, and in a manner that is perfectly in harmony with the ordinary course of human affairs. This is, in fact, the great miracle of Providence — that no miracles are needed to accomplish its purposes.'

Enough, and probably more than enough attention has been given to this alleged objection; but we have another reply, which to us seems, in itself, so decisive, that it may be proper to suggest it before leaving the subject. It is founded on the well-known fact, that thoughts and suggestions are continually rising in the mind, which observe no known law, which come and depart, wholly independently of our volitions, and whose origin, character and continuance are all beyond our comprehension. There is no part, perhaps, of that dark and yet unexplored subject, the human mind, which baffles in-

quity more than those laws of association by which its different thoughts, feelings or states are connected together. It is a well-known fact, too, that some of the fairest and most splendid creations of genius, and some of the greatest discoveries in every department of human knowledge, have been in this way originally suggested. Men call this fortuitous, accidental; by which they must mean, if they mean anything, as we have already said, that these elementary suggestions or hints come from some unknown cause. But the cause, though unknown to them, cannot be unknown to God. May He not then, and this, again, is the precise point to be attended to, may He not use these unknown methods of operating upon the human mind, to bring about any result which to Him seemeth good; and this, too, without interfering with, or suspending, for an instant, any of the known or permanent laws of nature? May he not thus send an answer of acceptance, or gracious return, to any prayer? May He not, to take an example before alluded to, send a thought or suggestion into any mind, which being arrested and dwelt upon by the individual, would lead to a precise knowledge, and furnish a complete antidote or cure of that pestilence which is 'walking in darkness,' in the midst of us? In what other way, or by what other agency, to adduce one instance out of many, was the great discovery of Vaccination originated and carried out into beneficent results? Let the atheist, if he please, call it accident; but he who believes in the superintending care of God, will regard it as His gracious work. Here then is one more method by which the 'Hearer of prayer' may give an express answer to our petition, not only without interfering, in the slightest degree, with

the known and permanent laws of His universe, but even through the ministry of those very laws. And as the whole weight of the objection before us rests upon the assumption that this cannot be done, the inference seems to be inevitable, that the objection is altogether worthless.

We have contented ourselves, thus far, with showing that God *may* send answers of acceptance to our prayers, without interfering with the known laws of nature. This is sufficient for our present purpose. It fully meets the objection before us. But we might, if it were deemed necessary, go further and assert, that it is highly probable that He *does* thus act by an agency independently of these general laws. These are necessary to the well being of men, that they may be enabled to act in reference to the future with foresight and calculation. This is their final cause or end. But there is no reason for supposing that the same system of general laws continues beyond the point where this final cause or end terminates. If, on the contrary, it be probable that there are many cases, in which the gracious purpose of God, in regard to man, may be best effected, without this agency of general laws, in the sphere beyond man's observation, then it is in the same degree probable, that He will thus act. Now, in point of fact, this probability is very strong. The blind and unbending effect of general laws, may, in a great variety of particular instances, produce more evil than good. Indeed, in the great variety and complexity of events in human life, it must be so. And, as we cannot suppose that the final results of any act of God will be evil, in all these cases, it is highly probable that He will thus act independently of the known and obvious laws of creation, to counteract that

overbalance of evil, which would result from the uncontrolled effect of these general laws.

We proceed now to advert to some other leading objections against the Efficacy of Prayer which are sometimes thought to be of importance. But as they are carefully examined in the leading treatises on this subject, we shall spare ourselves much detail. As the former objection was derived from the permanency of the laws of Creation, so these are derived from the inherent perfections of the Creator. Thus, *God*, it is said, *is infinitely wise, and knows better than we do ourselves what we really need, and that prayer, therefore, in this point of view, must be useless.* The simple answer to this is, that it is no object of prayer to give *information* to the omniscient God. And, as this is not the Efficacy which is claimed for Prayer, it appears to be very irrelevant to deny such an efficacy.

Again, it is said, *God is unchangeable, and that therefore it is a mere presumption to imagine that we may prevail upon Him by our importunities.* The reply is, that we do not attempt or expect to make any change in the *essential character* of God by our prayers. And if it be asked what we do expect, we reply, it is not unreasonable to believe, that, if we make a *change in our conduct and relations towards Him*, He will make a *change in His treatment of us.* It is no part of our present business, as we have said, to show the grounds of our belief in the Efficacy of Prayer, but we may just intimate here, that if it be necessarily fit and proper that dependent beings should humbly seek of God the blessings they constantly need; then it is necessarily fit and proper that God should regard these requests; and that He should make a difference, in his treatment, between those who

ask the especial attention of the reader, that these may be directed in answer to our prayers, without infringing or interrupting any of the known laws of nature, since they are wholly independent of their control. And, as they are thus directly to be ascribed to God, and are thus under His direct agency, and do thus seriously affect the destinies of men, is it irrational to infer, that it is by means of these chances or accidents, as we call them, that God prepares an especial moral discipline for every individual who lives? However this may be, it is plainly evident, and this is all we are now concerned to maintain, that he *may* thus answer the prayers of every individual, without at all deviating from the established course of nature. 'Herein,' as has been well said, 'especially is manifested the perfection of the Divine wisdom, that the most surprising conjunctions of events are brought about by the simplest means, and in a manner that is perfectly in harmony with the ordinary course of human affairs. This is, in fact, the great miracle of Providence — that no miracles are needed to accomplish its purposes.'

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the known and permanent laws of His universe, but even through the ministry of those very laws. And as the whole weight of the objection before us rests upon the assumption that this cannot be done, the inference seems to be inevitable, that the objection is altogether worthless.

We have contented ourselves, thus far, with showing that God *may* send answers of acceptance to our prayers, without interfering with the known laws of nature. This is sufficient for our present purpose. It fully meets the objection before us. But we might, if it were deemed necessary, go further and assert, that it is highly probable that He *does* thus act by an agency independently of these general laws. These are necessary to the well being of men, that they may be enabled to act in reference to the future with foresight and calculation. This is their final cause or end. But there is no reason for supposing that the same system of general laws continues beyond the point where this final cause or end terminates. If, on the contrary, it be probable that there are many cases, in which the gracious purpose of God, in regard to man, may be best effected, without this agency of general laws, in the sphere beyond man's observation, then it is in the same degree probable, that He will thus act. Now, in point of fact, this probability is very strong. The blind and unbending effect of general laws, may, in a great variety of particular instances, produce more evil than good. Indeed, in the great variety and complexity of events in human life, it must be so. And, as we cannot suppose that the final results of any act of God will be evil, in all these cases, it is highly probable that He will thus act independently of the known and obvious laws of creation, to counteract that

overbalance of evil, which would result from the uncontrolled effect of these general laws.

We proceed now to advert to some other leading objections against the Efficacy of Prayer which are sometimes thought to be of importance. But as they are carefully examined in the leading treatises on this subject, we shall spare ourselves much detail. As the former objection was derived from the permanency of the laws of Creation, so these are derived from the inherent perfections of the Creator. Thus, *God*, it is said, *is infinitely wise, and knows better than we do ourselves what we really need, and that prayer, therefore, in this point of view, must be useless.* The simple answer to this is, that it is no object of prayer to give *information* to the omniscient God. And, as this is not the Efficacy which is claimed for Prayer, it appears to be very irrelevant to deny such an efficacy.

Again, it is said, *God is unchangeable, and that therefore it is a mere presumption to imagine that we may prevail upon Him by our importunities.* The reply is, that we do not attempt or expect to make any change in the *essential character* of God by our prayers. And if it be asked what we do expect, we reply, it is not unreasonable to believe, that, if we make a *change in our conduct and relations towards Him*, He will make a *change in His treatment of us.* It is no part of our present business, as we have said, to show the grounds of our belief in the Efficacy of Prayer, but we may just intimate here, that if it be necessarily fit and proper that dependent beings should humbly seek of God the blessings they constantly need; then it is necessarily fit and proper that God should regard these requests; and that He should make a difference, in his treatment, between those who

make these requests, and those who make them not. If this be a mark of changeableness in the Deity, then every distinction, that He does or will make in this world or in the next, between those who comply with the conditions on which His favor is promised, and those who do not, is also a mark of changeableness. The fallacy of the objection lies in confounding the *absolute perfections* of God, considered as the inherent principles of His nature, and the *exercise* of those perfections in His relation to us as our moral Governor. His unchangeableness, as it respects us, consists not in acting towards us always in the same manner, whatever be our conduct towards Him, but in doing always what is right, and, of course, in varying His treatment of His children and subjects, according to their desert. If, then, the due offering of prayer to God, makes an alteration in the case of the suppliant, as, if it be a fulfilment of an absolute duty, made known both by reason and Scripture, it necessarily must; then, as has been well argued, His disregard of prayer would be an instance of changeableness in Him, and not his hearing and answering it. In this case, as in all those now referred to, we do not expect, to influence by any prayer of ours, the *essential character of God*, but we are encouraged, both by reason and Scripture to hope, that by making a change in our qualifications, we may make a change in his treatment of us.

How very unimportant this objection is, will further appear, by applying the same mode of reasoning to any other moral or religious duty, which is considered a means of procuring divine favor. You restrain prayer before God, because he is essentially unchangeable in His character, and no solicitations or homage of yours can influence Him. Why, do you not extend your rea-

sonings to every other duty ? Let us apply it, by way of illustration to that of Repentance. Why should you repent of your iniquities ? God is unchangeable, and therefore all you can do must be unavailing. If you urge that it is right, in itself, that sinful creatures should gain a newness of heart and life, to ensure the favor of a holy God ; we reply, that this is true, but that it is not more so than that prayer in a dependent creature is right in itself. If you urge that repentance is expressly commanded, we answer, so is prayer, and by the same authority. If, yet further, you urge that repentance is an express condition of obtaining God's favorable regard, we still reply, so is prayer. If therefore you reject this duty on the ground of God's unchangeableness, then be consistent, and reject every other means of obtaining His favor, on the same ground. But the difficulty does not stop here. The objection which is thus brought against prayer, lies with equal strength against every other human effort. The duration of our lives, and all the circumstances of life, are known to God, and nothing which we can do, can effect his unchangeable purposes. But are we, on this account, to take no precautions for our continuance, safety and well-being ? If this reasoning be plainly unsound, when applied to all these subjects, it is equally so, when applied to prayer. The objection proves too much, and is, therefore, of no moment. God is omniscient and unchangeable. This is admitted. But in His wisdom, and in His mercy, as we believe, He has appointed certain conditions, on the performance of which He will give or withhold his favor. There is something to be done by us before we can receive the promised boon. If we do not comply with the condition,

it is presumption to expect the desired result. If we do, then we may humbly but yet confidently rely on the faithfulness of Him who hath promised. And this, as we have said, is as true of prayer as of every other duty.

We take leave of this part of the subject here. We have remarked upon all those objections to the Efficacy of Prayer, which are believed to be of any importance. And we have dwelt thus, at length, upon these, not because they are considered of any great weight in themselves; but because if they be allowed to go into general circulation, in the world abroad, and to pass through the mind unexamined, they will spread insensibly over this all-important part of our religious exercises, a feeling of distrust, a sort of lurking infidelity, which is most hostile to all true devotion, and will shut out the soul, as by a wall of adamant, from a near and confiding communion with its God.

PART SECOND.

EFFICACY OF PRAYER ASSERTED.

IN the preceding remarks, we have attempted to answer those objections which are most frequently alleged against the Christian doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer. We shall now endeavor to set in order some of the more important arguments by which the doctrine is supported. Our main design in this discussion is, as we have already said, to impress upon other minds what we deem to be important truths on this exceedingly interesting

subject. We shall, therefore, in the remarks which will follow, go directly to our object, using those arguments and suggestions which appear to be soundest, and best adapted to our purpose, without being solicitous whether they be original or not.

What reason, then, have we to believe that prayer is one of the means of obtaining the help of God?

Our first remark is, that this Efficacy is *promised to our Prayers in God's revealed word*. We consider the language of Scriptures on this point to be full, decided and unequivocal. The doctrine is uniformly recognised in the old covenant and in the new. 'The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth' 'He will fulfil the desires of them that fear him, he will hear their cry, and save them.' 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him.' The fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.' 'This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' We need not, we suppose, add to these examples. Although it has been attempted to restrict their meaning to certain persons, times and circumstances, yet we see no good reason for doing so, which would not apply to any other exhortation, precept or promise of the Scriptures. This is especially true of the direction and promise of our Saviour above quoted, which do not seem, according to the acknowledged rules of interpretation, to admit of a meaning which restricts them to his immediate disciples. Indeed, by the words, 'how much more shall he give good things to them that ask him?' he seems to render encouragement to prayer as general as words can make it.

And again, when he directed his followers to pray, and gave them a form as a model, can we believe he intended to prescribe an act and a form, which he knew to be useless and unavailing? And when, in this form, he inserted certain direct petitions, both for spiritual and temporal blessings, thereby exciting an expectation, in the minds of his followers, that their petitions would be regarded by the Hearer of prayer, can we believe that he knew, all the while, that they would not be regarded? Would this be ingenuous? Would it be *like* our Saviour, thus to mock and deceive those, who, in meekness and in confidence, looked to him for counsel and direction in a matter so solemn as this? We think, then, it is assuming nothing to say, that this argument from the Scriptures is decisive; and that he, therefore, who receives them as containing a revelation from God, and reflects seriously on the import of the passages above cited, as well as on the general tenor of their language in reference to this subject, must admit, that whatever difficulties may attend the subject, in other respects, the doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer is a doctrine taught of God.

But, further, it is a doctrine which does not rest upon authority merely. *It is, in itself, entirely rational.* And in the first place, we would inquire, whether it is not altogether fitting and proper that weak and imperfect creatures should bow down in adoration before Him who is clothed with infinitely adorable attributes? That dependent beings should acknowledge their dependence? That he who receives from God all that he is, or has, or hopes for, should gratefully acknowledge His favors? That he who is conscious of his many sins and much estrangement from his Heavenly Benefactor and Friend, should supplicate His pardoning mercy? And, especial-

ly, that he who feels his need of aid from above, at every step he takes, and with every breath he breathes, should implore this aid? Is not all this, in the highest degree, fitting and proper? Are not these dispositions and these acts considered rational and right in the ordinary relations of life, and towards earthly benefactors? And shall they not be esteemed so in reference to our God, with whom our relations are infinitely more near and close than with any other being, and whose benefits are infinitely greater? Suppose they were not prescribed, yet would not the natural unperverted reason of man lead him to their observance? If, then, they are thus right and proper in themselves, is it not reasonable to suppose that he who performs them worthily, does thereby render himself more an object of God's favor, than he who performs them not? Are not the relations of the suppliant with his Maker favorably changed by these very acts? Must he not be more the object of complacent regard, in the sight of his God, than he was before? And is it not reasonable to suppose, that in the bestowment of heavenly gifts, his well-deserving, in this respect, shall come up in gracious recognition before the Hearer of prayer, and become the means of procuring favors not granted to those who neglect a duty thus fitting and proper?

And there is another aspect of this subject, which leads to the same conclusion. Prayer is a native instinct of the human soul. It is rendered necessary, by the very natures which God has given us; and prayer, let it be marked in connexion with this, involves necessarily the belief, that if duly offered, it will be heard. And hence we infer, *that being thus a necessary part of our natures, it is not implanted in vain; and thus necessarily involv-*

ing this belief, it will not be disappointed. Both these positions, we think, must be admitted, and if true, the inference from them inevitably follows. Prayer, in all the different parts of the exercise, is thus natural to the constitution of human nature. It is natural to the heart, to bow down in adoration, before transcendent excellence. It is natural to the heart, to overflow with gratitude, in the reception of countless blessings, or at least, in the reception of great and unexpected favors. It is natural to the heart, to be wrung with penitential sorrow, under the consciousness of guilt. And it is natural to the heart, amidst evils felt and feared, to seek the aid of that Being, who alone is mighty to save. The very idea of God suggests the duty and the privilege of prayer. The voice of nature calls to prayer, even where the idea of the true God is not known. All nations, kindred, and tongues; all of all places; all of all times; all of all religions, true or false; all of all sects; all feel the strong necessity, and all join in the earnest aspirations of prayer. There beats not, at this moment, and there never did beat, beneath the sun, a human heart, that has not felt the need of prayer, and that has not sought, with or without words, the help of a known or an unknown God. However in giddy youth; or in the death-dance of a dissipated career; or in the dreadful infatuation of an over-busy life; or in the headlong indulgence of the senses and passions; this necessity of prayer may be unfelt; yet still, it is a resource, to which the spirit naturally and instinctively turns, in its dark and trying hours. Then it is felt as a strong desire of our natures. Then is it sought by an inherent impulse. Then it becomes a craving want, an irrepressible longing of the soul, and it feels that it must pray or die. And is it rational to believe that God should have

given this decided tendency to our natures, for no assignable purpose ? that He should have rendered this offering of our spirits thus natural, thus necessary, and yet at the same time wholly useless ? If so, it is a strange anomaly in nature. Every other natural feeling and propensity, has its object, its final cause ; and can we believe that this has none ? That God made man to pray, and let it be particularly noted, made him to pray in the hope and expectation that his prayers shall be heard and answered, for this is involved in the very act of prayer, and yet wholly disappoint this hope and expectation ? Are we thus deluded by our God ? Is it not far more rational to believe that when He thus made man to pray, an act which necessarily involves the belief that it will have an efficacy in procuring His favor, that he thereby made it an appointed means of obtaining this favor, and that it will not end in disappointment and mockery ?

The doctrine then, of the Efficacy of Prayer, rests, first, on the full, express, and unequivocal declarations and injunctions of the scriptures ; and especially, on the declarations and injunctions of our Saviour, and which were also enforced by his very emphatic example. It rests, secondly, on the fact, that as prayer is fitting and proper, in itself, as an offering of man to God, so it is rational to suppose that it is one of the conditions which God regards in the communication of good to men ; and that he who performs it duly, therefore, as he does what is fitting and right, may reasonably expect blessings, which he who does not perform it, may not expect. It rests, thirdly, on the fact, that as it is an instinctive suggestion and want of our spirits, which is to be referred to him who created them ; and as it necessarily implies the belief that our offerings will not be disregarded ; it is rea-

sonable to suppose, that this call of our natures was not given to delude us, and that this belief will not be disappointed.

But, it may be asked, if prayer have this efficacy in obtaining the especial favor of God, why is it not made evident to our experience? If He indeed grant the prayer of our petition, so far, as in his wisdom, he sees to be best, why is not this fact so made known in the bestowment of the boon, as to remove all doubt on the subject? This is a question which has pressed upon many devout and anxious minds, and, on this account, deserves to be carefully considered.

And, in reply, we observe that the importance of the objection, that we have no palpable and unambiguous experience, that our prayers are answered in the manner above explained, is precisely measured by the antecedent probability, that on the supposition of our prayers possessing the efficacy claimed for them, in procuring the blessings sought, this efficacy would be thus made known. Now there are various reasons why this should not be expected. But one, which seems decisive to us, is, that it would be contrary to the analogies of divine providence in similar cases. No good effort or act is thus stamped with the immediate and visible seal of God's approbation. A certain degree of vagueness and uncertainty rests upon all the issues of human conduct, however good, and however acceptable to our great Witness and Judge. Temperance, for example, is ordinarily the means of health and prolonged life, and thus bears the mark of God's approval; but no specific indication of divine favor, follows every act of self-denial. Probity, as a general rule, secures success in business, the confidence of men, self-respect, and peace of conscience, and

is thus distinguished by the favor of God ; but no immediate proof or manifestation of this, is attached to every instance of uprightness and fair dealing. Piety, in all its exercises and offices, is always, we may be sure, followed by a divine blessing ; but no immediate and palpable indication of this, attends every instance of an humble reference of ourselves to God. The same is true of all similar acts and offerings, which we cannot doubt are acceptable to Him, and blessed of Him. We see, then, that it is contrary to the analogies of his providence, in the present state, that He should mark His approbation and acceptance of our conduct, however worthy, by any palpable, and unambiguous, and immediate tokens or evidences. He will have us act on a sense of duty, and trust to the 'faithfulness of Him who hath promised. It would be throwing us back at once into the Jewish dispensation, if 'voices out of heaven' were to 'instruct' us at each step of our earthly pilgrimage. He has placed us under a more liberal discipline. 'Happy are they who have not seen, and yet have believed,' is His continual language to men in all events, and in the performance of every duty. What reason, then, have we to expect a different one, in regard to prayer ? There seems to be none. On the contrary, it appears far more rational to conclude that, as in the bestowment of all other blessings in return for worthy conduct, the visible presence of the divine hand is not manifested ; so in regard to prayer, it may be accepted and answered, and yet without any visible and palpable tokens of divine approbation. And as the objection against the Efficacy of Prayer derived from the fact that this efficacy is not distinctly marked out by God, is precisely measured by the grounds we have for think-

ing beforehand that it would be thus designated, it seems to have no solid foundation.

The answer of Paley to this objection, is different ; and as, with great deference to his authority, it appears to us incomplete and unsatisfactory, we shall quote it at length, that the brief remarks we shall presume to offer upon it, may be better understood and appreciated.

‘ But efficacy is ascribed to prayer without the proof, we are told, which can alone in such a subject produce conviction, the confirmation of experience. Concerning the appeal to experience, I shall content myself with this remark, that if prayer were suffered to disturb the order of second causes appointed in the universe too much, or to produce its effects with the same regularity that they do, it would introduce a change into human affairs, which in some important respects would be evidently for the worse. Who, for example would labor, if his necessities could be supplied with equal certainty by prayer ? How few would contain within any bounds of moderation those passions and pleasures, which at present are checked only by disease, or the dread of it, if prayer would infallibly restore health ? In short, if the Efficacy of Prayer were so constant and observable as to be relied upon *beforehand*, it is easy to foresee that the conduct of mankind would, in proportion to that reliance, become careless and disorderly.’*

We have ventured to allude to this reply, as incomplete and unsatisfactory, and this, partly, because the phrase ‘ if prayer were suffered to disturb the order of second causes appointed in the universe *too much*,’ conveys to our minds no distinct idea ; but, principally, because the examples

* Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, Book V. Ch. ii.

adduced of the bad consequences which would follow a visible and express efficacy attending our prayers, are all instances of petitions *unworthy in themselves*, since they do not include, on the part of the petitioner, that state of the soul, and those appropriate efforts which should always accompany his petitions. It may be readily admitted that a palpable return, or *any* return to such prayers as these, would disturb the settled order of nature, and tend to render men 'careless and disorderly.' But yet the question would recur, why should not prayers worthy in themselves, and worthily offered, as it is asserted they are efficacious in procuring the divine favor, be followed by visible tokens of this favor? In the following extract, which succeeds in immediate connexion with that already cited, a true and sufficient answer, yet different from that we have suggested, is *indicated*, and we have only to regret, that it was not illustrated by some examples, to render its meaning more precise and plain, especially in regard to that very just and important remark at the close of the quotation, 'since it appears probable, this very ambiguity is necessary to the happiness and safety of human life.'

'It is possible in the nature of things, that our prayers may, in many instances, be efficacious, and yet our experience of their efficacy be dubious and obscure. Therefore, if the light of nature instruct us by any other arguments to hope for effect from prayer; still more, if the scriptures authorize these hopes by promises of acceptance; it seems not a sufficient reason for calling in question the reality of such effects, that our observations of them are ambiguous: especially since it appears probable, that this very ambiguity is necessary to the happiness and safety of human life.'



We proceed, yet further, to observe that as we may hope and trust, our prayers for *ourselves* will have an efficacy in procuring the favor of God, so we may also hope and trust, that our intercessions for *others* will not be unheard or unanswered by our common Father in heaven. This, as in the former case, is the assurance of Scripture. Our Saviour answered the prayer of the woman of Canaan for her daughter. His own prayers were earnestly offered to God for his immediate followers, and not for 'these alone, but those also which should believe on him through their word.' The apostles made 'continual mention' of their absent friends in their prayers. They ask the prayer of their followers in their own behalf; and St. James directs his disciples, in so many words, to 'pray for one another.' As prayer then for others is enjoined, as well as prayer for ourselves, it follows that it is as rational to conclude it will have an efficacy in the one case as in the other. Besides, it is entirely analogous with the known order of providence, that the conduct of one individual, should, in manifold ways, affect the welfare of those around him, without any agency on their part; but simply by means of those connexions by which we are bound together in this life. Indeed, almost all our blessings are thus conferred by the influence of others. Why should not our prayers be one means of exercising this beneficent agency, which God will smile upon and bless? There is nothing more irrational in this, than that we should be the agents which He uses to communicate favors to others, in countless other ways. And now, in connexion with these remarks, let it be noted, that our prayers for others are as proper and fitting, taking into view the *relations* we bear to them, as our prayers for ourselves.

And we have, therefore, the same reason for believing that the right performance of what is thus fitting and proper will have the same efficacy in regard to others, as it has in regard to ourselves. Our prayers for others, yet further, are as natural, and therefore as necessary a dictate of the heart, as our prayers for ourselves ; and it is as irrational, in the one case as in the other, to think that this natural call to prayer, should have been given in vain, and that the expectation which is necessarily involved in this prayer, that it will be heard and answered, should be delusive. And in addition to all this, may we not conceive it to be most consonant to the character of our common Father in heaven, that he should honor and reward the benevolent dispositions of his children, by hearing and answering those prayers, which in Christian love, simplicity, and sincerity, they offer for one another? Certain it is, there are many instances in which we should value such a return to our prayers, much more than any return which should be sent to us alone.

The doctrine of the Efficacy of Prayer, thus explained and asserted, seems to us to be fully sustained by the Scripture, entirely rational in itself, and in perfect analogy with all else that we know of the dealings of Divine Providence. But it is, in practice, often encumbered with mistakes and perversions, which have brought discredit on the doctrine. There are two of these, which it may be expedient distinctly to point out.

One is, that in consequence of the Efficacy ascribed to Prayer, *means and efforts in reference to the blessing sought, may be omitted.* This mistake, though by no means uncommon, is too bald and obvious, we trust, to have gained much prevalence in a community like ours ;

and we shall dismiss it with a very brief commentary. Prayer and effort are never to be disjoined. The Christian who will not act in furtherance of his prayers, is scarcely a less consistent being than he who will not pray in furtherance of his efforts. While we feel deeply sensible that all our ultimate dependence rests on God alone, we should labor, in the way of His appointment, as if every thing depended on our own exertions. Prayer, then, is to inspire and aid our efforts, not to supersede them. While we believe that God 'is rich to all that call upon him,' we are also to remember that it is presumption to think that He will work a miracle for any.

Another error which has prevailed to the discredit of a belief in the doctrine we maintain, is, that it has been considered as a direct *means of obtaining the particular and especial favor desired*. It is very possible, in this way, to carry the doctrine to an extreme, and render it exceptionable, and even absurd. But in asserting that there is an Efficacy belonging to Prayer, we say nothing of its precise extent, or to what precise degree it becomes a ground of divine favor. This, it is the province of the great Hearer of Prayer to determine, and is known only to Him. Much particularity in our petitions is therefore to be avoided, since the manner and the degree in which the desired blessings should be bestowed, are under a higher and infinitely better arrangement than ours. We know [not, in this respect, how to pray, or what to pray for. In our darkness and blindness, and with our hearts full of fond and foolish wishes, we may ask for an apparent good, but which is, in truth, a real evil. The thought struck even a heathen, that

'We might be cursed with every granted prayer.'

Our own experience may have taught us the same. How often have we felt it to be impossible not to embody in our prayers some petition for a longed-for good, which the lapse of time and events has shown us, was withholden in mercy. And, on the other hand, that which seemed to our apprehension a harsh and cruel disappointment of our petitions, has proved, in the result, the means and the way of a before unimagined benefit. We should feel, then, that it is not for such as we to point out the paths of Providence. We should ask what we ask, with an entire submission to the will of Heaven. We should rejoice that we are not at our own disposal. We should gratefully and tenderly realize that God knows us better than we know ourselves; that He loves us better than we love ourselves; that He will do for us better than we can ask or conceive for ourselves; and that He will answer our petitions, if not according to their precise import, yet according to the import that we ourselves should give to them, were we as great and wise and good as He. We should

‘ Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice,
Safe in His power, whose eyes discern afar,
The secret ambush of a specious prayer;
Implore His aid. in His decisions rest,
Secure, whate’er He gives, He gives the best.’

The doctrine which we have thus endeavored to support and explain, is, at all times, most sustaining and most consolatory. Without it our prayers will be deprived of their first object and most important significance. But with the full assurance that they are indeed heard by Him who is mighty to save, and that they will

be answered by Him so far as is consistent with His own ineffable wisdom and goodness, and our best welfare, they are as the breath of spiritual life to the Christian. This assurance gives a feeling of reality, depth and tenderness to our devotions, which enables us to enter now, in some measure, into that communion with our God, which is to be the portion and reward of the accepted spirit in the heavenly world. Do we not speak to the experience of the reader in this? Is there no response to these words, in his own consciousness? If so, let him not, on this account, reject the doctrine we thus defend and assert. It is possible he is no competent judge in this matter. He may be very wary and very successful in all those selfish calculations and objects which regard this present world. He may deem himself so wise and clear-headed as to feel authorized to say that we are speaking the language of excited feeling and raised enthusiasm. But still this may be a subject, on which, with the idols he has set up in his bosom, and with his present state and habits of mind, he is not qualified to speak. His pursuits may have led him into trains of thought so diverse and even opposite, that he can have no sympathy with ours in this. There yet may be a boon and a blessedness here on the earth to be enjoyed, of which, with his merely earthly objects before him, he has not yet attained the slightest conception. And let him be reminded, yet further, there may be a wisdom of the soul whose price no earthly wealth can reach. Have any whose eyes rest on these lines, felt this communion of the heart with its God, they, *they* know that our words, and that all words, serve, rather as shadows than as lights, to indicate the blessed reality.

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THE
FOUNDATION
OF OUR
CONFIDENCE IN THE SAVIOUR.

BY ALVAN LAMSON.
Pastor of the First Church in Dedham.

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OF OUR

CONFIDENCE IN THE SAVIOUR.

It is one of the popular objections against Unitarianism, that by denying that Jesus is the Supreme God, it weakens the ground of our confidence in him; that it destroys the value and efficacy of his teachings and cross, and thus fails of meeting the wants of the sinner; that it furnishes no adequate Saviour, and opens no fountain of true and lasting comfort and peace. This objection, it is the purpose of my present remarks to meet. I shall attempt to show, that the foundation of our confidence in Jesus remains the same, whatever views are entertained of his nature and person. We build not on the *dignity of his nature*, but on the *commission he received from the Father* to teach and to save. We view him as 'sent into the world' by the Father, as having come in the Father's name, and clothed with his authority, and on this fact we rest — rest on the *divinity of his mission*.

This simple fact, — that Jesus was of, or from God, that is, was commissioned by him, acted under his direc-

tion and by his authority, we view as one of immense interest and importance, because it goes to show that Christians are in harmony on the most essential, we may say the only essential, point of faith. A belief of this one great and leading fact, entitles persons to the name of Christians, in the original and correct acceptation of the term, prepares them to listen to Jesus as one, who brought us the words of everlasting life, to go to him and to his religion for guidance, for support, and solace now, and to hope for the pardon and happiness to be hereafter dispensed in his name. Whatever different and conflicting sentiments men entertain concerning his person, as long as they admit this one fact, they stand on common ground. There is only one basis of their trust and hopes in Christ, and the speculations, in which they indulge on the subject of his original nature and essence, whatever conclusions they suggest, leave that basis untouched.

For proof of the correctness of our position, that the divinity, not of *Christ's nature*, but of his *mission*, furnishes the proper, and the only proper ground of trust in him, we must appeal to the sacred writings, and we do this with the firm belief, that the evidence they afford on the subject is full and overwhelming. In all the New Testament, is there a word employed, or a hint dropped, which would lead us to suppose, that he saves us by virtue of his own unborrowed greatness? What was the sentiment he seemed particularly anxious to impress on the minds of those whom the fame of his wisdom, or of his miracles, drew around him? What the style, in which he addressed them? What the belief it unavoidably inspires? That the value of his ministrations depended on the original mode of his existence, or the time at which it commenced?

No. Those ministrations owe all their worth and efficacy to that greater Being, who ordained and accepted them.

I. Take first, his instructions. The doctrines of Jesus have, in the view of all Christians, a value and certainty, to which mere human reasoning never aspires. We go to the simple narratives of the evangelists, we endeavor to gather up his precious words, we listen to catch every sound which falls from his lips, for we are confident, that he uttered truths which man's wisdom could never teach. Now whence does this confidence, this reverence for our Saviour's words, which, in the mind of the pious Christian, grows and strengthens with time, arise? It must originate in the persuasion, either that he partook of a divine nature, or that he was divinely illumined: either that he was God, or acted by his authority, was commissioned, taught and directed by him. And we see not why his instructions would not be entitled to as much respect, in the latter case, as in the former. Let us be convinced beyond all doubt, that a divine spirit rested on him, that he was admitted to a familiarity with the counsels of heaven, expressed in the scriptures by the phrase, being 'in the bosom of the Father,' that God was with him and dwelt in him, as he has dwelt in no other being, we are compelled to receive his teachings as the teachings of the Father. They bear as broad a stamp of divinity, as decided features of a heavenly origin, as we can demand, or the Deity bestow. We feel that nothing is wanting to inspire the utmost veneration for them. They have God for their author as truly and strictly, as if he were present and uttered them. Jesus was only the organ, through which he

conveyed them to our understanding and senses. As such, and as such alone, he asks to be heard. He attributes nothing to his own affluence and fulness, but with the meekness of true and profound piety, ascribes all to his Father's gift. '*My doctrine is not mine,*' he says, '*but his that sent me.*' (John vii. 16.) He that sent me is true, and *I speak to the world those things, which I have heard of him.*' (John. viii. 26) '*I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. Whatsoever I speak, therefore even as the Father hath said unto me I speak.*' (John xii. 49, 50.) '*All things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*' (John xv. 15.)

I might quote much more to the same effect. Now I would ask any sober and reflecting person, whether it is supposable, whether it is possible, that Jesus would have spoken thus, had he been desirous of inspiring a belief of his original dignity and omniscience, as the basis of our respect for his instructions. No. Such language could have been employed only with one view. It expresses one great and prominent sentiment, and expresses it fully and strongly. It teaches us, as plainly as words can, that he claimed to be heard as one inspired, taught, and sent of God, and in no other character. This is the only construction, which the laws of common sense and sound criticism allow us to put upon it. Every other construction is manifestly forced and erroneous. The distinction sometimes resorted to between an inferiority of nature, and an official inferiority, and the old fiction of two natures, will not explain it, except on principles, which would render the bible an incomprehensible book, and have the effect of introducing total uncertainty into

all human language. The fundamental rule of interpretation, which requires words to be understood in their obvious and unembarrassed sense, and according to established usage, unless the general strain of the discourse or argument in which they occur, the known views of the author, his usual mode of expressing himself, and the probability that he does not mean to utter an absurdity, suggest some modification as necessary, compels us to believe, that our Lord, by the above-mentioned and similar expressions, meant to direct the attention of his hearers to his divine mission, as the sole ground of their confidence in him. Had he intended to give their thoughts this direction, he could not have chosen words better fitted for his purpose. We have no choice left us but either to suppose, that such was his intention, or to sit down in utter despair of ever being able to comprehend his language.

The miracles of our Lord were intended to confirm the sentiment so anxiously inculcated in that class of passages to which I have referred. They were wrought not to prove the dignity of his *person*, but the origin of his *mission*. This is a very important distinction, and one which is fully authorized by the language of the New Testament. No instance, we feel safe in affirming, can be produced, in which our Lord himself, or his apostles, speak of the miraculous powers, with which he was invested, as implying an exalted nature ; — no instance in which those powers were exerted with a view to inspire a reverence for the greatness of his underived attributes, or suggest the inference that he partook of a divine essence. On the contrary, he was careful to forewarn his followers against drawing any such inference from the

astonishing works, of which they were spectators. He tells them that *of himself* he can *do nothing*, (John v. 30.) that all his power was given him of his Father; and it was given, as he expressly asserts, as the seal of his heavenly mission. It proved, and was intended to prove, nothing as to his rank or essence. '*The works, which the Father hath given me to finish,*' he observes, '*the same works, that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.*' (John v. 36.) Such was their design; and so, I add, they were viewed by those who witnessed them. Thus Nicodemus says to him, '*Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles, which thou dost, except God be with him.*' (John iii. 2.) A similar sentiment was frequently expressed by others during the term of our Lord's ministry, and by his Apostles after his death. His miraculous gifts were regarded as establishing the fact, that he was divinely raised up, sent, and aided, and nothing more. It remained for subsequent ages, when men had departed from the simplicity which was in Christ, to turn them into an argument for his original and independent divinity.

The true basis, then, of our reverence for the words of our Saviour, if we may trust our bibles, is the commission he received from the Father to instruct the world. His doctrines derive their whole value and weight from the circumstance, that he was a Teacher sent from God, that God was with him, and in token of his presence, and of the all-important work he had committed to him, bestowed on him the power of working miracles. Such is the doctrine breathed from almost every page of the New Testament. It appears astonishing, that its truth should ever have been questioned; that after the most solemn

assurances of our Lord, that he was only the medium through which God conversed with man, that the gracious words which fell from his lips, were not his own, but proceeded from the Father, any other ground of our confidence in his revelations should have been suggested.

II. I now pass to my second general topic, the efficacy of Christ's sufferings. That his death was highly subservient to the object he came into the world to accomplish is doubted by none. It tended in itself, and especially as followed by his resurrection, to add weight to his instructions, to overcome indifference, to touch the sensibility, and send a healing and quickening influence to the heart. It has, in the opinion of all Christians, an important moral efficacy. It is one of the numerous means, which christianity employs for bringing the sinner to repentance, forming in him the character God approves, and thus procuring for him pardon and felicity. It operates on man, and, in this view, performs an office of momentous value and importance.

A further efficacy, it is well known, has been usually contended for, though different views are entertained of its nature. Some of these views may be easily shown to be encumbered with difficulties, or lead to consequences which compel us to reject them. Thus we cannot hesitate, for one moment, to pronounce the popular notion, that the sufferings of Christ operate on God, by making satisfaction to his justice, and thus disposing or enabling him to feel and extend compassion to his sinning and penitent offspring, as unscriptural, absurd and impious; for it goes to rob the Deity of his unalterable attributes of love and mercy, and convert him into an unfeeling and changeful tyrant, whose indulgence and fa-

vor must be purchased with the price of blood. The justice, which is spoken of, and which is supposed to be satisfied by the sufferings of Jesus, is not the justice of a father, nor justice in the best and noblest sense of the term, an exalted and godlike quality, which distinguishes between the penitent and impenitent, which chastens that it may reform sin, which makes use of gentle invitations of love, and soft whispers of hope, which resorts to severity only when milder methods have been exhausted, and employs no more of it than is needed to accomplish the ends of benevolence by bringing the wanderer back to God, to virtue and to happiness. No. It is narrow, vindictive justice; arbitrary will, justice viewed not so much the property of the best, as of the most despotic natures; not so much the quality of a moral agent, as a sort of abstract phantom, having feelings, views and interests of its own, jealous of its dignity, and suspicious of insult, rigorous, implacable, revengeful; demanding a full equivalent of suffering for every offence. Justice of the former kind, moral justice, which is the only justice we can without impiety ascribe to the Deity, includes compassion as part of itself. It does not exact of the reformed transgressor the punishment, which is due only to hardened and persevering iniquity. It shudders at the idea of inflicting on the penitent the same chastisement, which is inflicted on the careless and obdurate. It delights in mercy still more than in judgment. Its favorite work and object, in fact, are to inspire in the offender sorrow and regret for having offended; to encourage his repentance, and urge him to perfect it; to watch over and cherish within him all good affections; finally, to enrich his soul with genuine, exalted and heavenly vir-

tue as the source of all true peace and happiness. To withhold compassion from a penitent, and therefore deserving object, is wholly foreign from its nature, argues a spirit of severity, and partakes of a character of substantial injustice. We cannot ascribe such a spirit and character to God, without blotting out his venerable perfections, effacing his divinity, divesting him not merely of the affections of a Father, but of all the attributes of a moral being.

Mercy to the contrite and reformed, like approbation of goodness, is a moral affection, which a perfect being cannot lay down without changing his whole nature. It must be inspired by moral and personal qualities in its object; it can be inspired by no other; nor can it be transferred from one object to another of a different and opposite character, from one that is deserving to one that is worthless. No foreign consideration can produce or extinguish it. This and all other moral affections, we are persuaded, are strong and perfect in the Deity; he could not, therefore, love and approve the wicked any the more because a noble and accepted victim consented to be sacrificed for them, and thus render his merits precious in the sight of heaven. That he did not spare such a victim, but freely gave him for us, may with propriety be urged as a strong evidence and expression of his compassion towards his creatures, but it could in no sense generate that compassion, or cause any change in those moral affections of approbation and disapprobation, which he must feel toward his intelligent offspring exactly corresponding to character. — A deep sense of the turpitude of sin, remorse for having become stained with it, and persevering efforts to wipe off its pollutions, and ob-

tain the temper and habits, prescribed by reason, and inculcated by the precepts of Jesus Christ, are right and fit, they are such as become the sinner ; such as entitle him to the regard and indulgence of all intelligent natures. Not to feel and show this regard and indulgence would suppose a want of those affections and principles, which should be found in all moral beings, and of which God especially, as standing at the head of all such beings in the universe, the fountain and example of all exalted justice, all beneficence and mercy, cannot surely be destitute.

The notion that Christ's sufferings were intended to satisfy divine justice, though not yet abandoned, is not, perhaps, as prevalent now, as it has been in some former times. A more modern theory is, that the sacrifice of an exalted victim, though not viewed in the light of a satisfaction, and not designed to operate on God, was necessary to display his hatred of iniquity, and maintain the respect due to his laws ; that to pardon sin without it, would produce contempt for his justice, and thus defeat the ends of moral government. This mode of viewing the subject appears equally erroneous with that just noticed. It drops, to be sure, some of the more odious features of the old system ; it partakes a little more of the vague and mystical ; its absurdity is not quite as palpable, but it is equally repugnant to the reason and to the uniform sense of the sacred writings.

How God manifests his love of justice and abhorrence of sin by inflicting on a deserving object, the sufferings due only to the undeserving, or, for it resolves itself into this at last, by punishing the innocent to let the guilty escape, is more than we are able to comprehend. The

very reverse of this would seem to follow. The spectacle of a sinless being stretched on the cross to expiate the crimes of the wicked, or prepare the way for their forgiveness, far from inspiring a reverence for God's moral attributes, is, according to our view, fitted effectually to weaken or destroy it. It would furnish as strong an argument of his injustice and cruelty as could possibly be offered to our minds. The greatness of our Lord's sufferings, voluntarily met to redeem us from the dominion and punishment of sin, should certainly cause us to reflect on the bitter and tremendous consequences of persevering in it. So much would not have been undergone to avert from us any trifling evil. But when we are told, that those sufferings, instead of being viewed as a sacrifice made in the cause of virtue and humanity, are to be regarded as an exhibition designed to illustrate God's supreme regard for justice, and without which he would have been compelled, in order to secure the ends of his government, to punish sin to the utmost, though wept over and forsaken, we are amazed at the extraordinary suggestion; and are tempted to ask, what sort of justice is that, a fear of which must be inspired by the shedding of such precious blood? And what sort of government that which rests on such justice as its basis? Surely it is not a government, which would be permitted to stand on earth for an hour.

A large class of Christians, however, rejecting the before-mentioned views of the death of Christ, are still not satisfied with ascribing to it simply a moral efficacy. They think, that the scriptures represent it as a method, an instrument, or procuring cause of human forgiveness in a different, and higher sense, making it the means of

rendering repentance available to pardon. Whether this opinion be correct, or rests merely on some Jewish reasoning, and Rabbinical and figurative expressions, which require to be interpreted cautiously, and with considerable latitude, it does not fall within the design of my present remarks to examine. All which is now contended for is, that if the death of Jesus have any efficacy of this kind, it must owe it solely to God's special appointment. Nothing would induce us to believe, for a single moment, that the anguish, either bodily or mental, of any being however exalted, could, naturally and of itself, have any influence in removing the guilt or delivering us from the punishment of sin. It could not have the effect, and was not wanted, to excite God's compassion towards his creatures, or call forth expressions in their favor. Was the spectacle of a sinless being, exposed as a malefactor on the cross, of a nature to soothe or gratify him? Was it necessary, that having glutted his thirst of vengeance by the sight, he might turn away appeased and softened? No. He takes no pleasure in cruelty; he delights not in blood. If the sacrifice of an innocent sufferer, therefore, was the price or instrument of our forgiveness, or in any way conduced to it, except so far as it was adapted to excite and nourish our virtue, and thus render us fit subjects of pardon, it must have become such only because God, for reasons not explained to us, expressly ordained it; and then the nature and rank of the sufferer cease to be of any importance. Nothing depends on them, but all rests on the divine will and appointment. The only question, which we are concerned to settle, then is, has God ordained the sacrifice? If so, it must be an adequate one. We have no

right to doubt the sufficiency of the victim chosen and accepted of him, or to say that he could not have selected a being of a different order, whose death, had he so pleased, would have had the same efficacy. Had he fixed on any other being in the universe, of however inferior a nature, as the medium of conveying the benefits of his mercy to the world, that being would have been rendered competent by the very act of God choosing and ordaining him; and thus the argument for the original dignity of our Lord's nature, from the supposed necessity of an exalted victim, falls to the ground.

It is asserted, I know, that there is something peculiarly soothing in the belief, that a being of an infinite nature stands between God and us to urge his merits in our behalf. Such a belief, we are told, is fitted more than any other to cheer and sustain the soul weighed down by a sense of imperfection and unworthiness. If so, it is because we are accustomed to false and degrading conceptions of the Divine Being. Right views of him are suited not more to fill us with reverence, than with exalted love and unshaken trust. We regard it as one of the heaviest charges against that mass of gloomy and corrupt doctrines, which have for ages overshadowed Christianity, that they lead men to transfer to another those affections, which are primarily due only to the Supreme Divinity. They tend to exalt the Saviour above God in our love and esteem. It is not surprising, that a mind fully persuaded of the truth of the popular doctrines concerning God and Jesus, and thoroughly imbued with their spirit, should turn away with shuddering from the sterner attributes of the Father to repose in the milder nature of the Son. The latter is represented

as possessing a character far more attractive of the two. The Father is clothed with awe inspiring power, and holds the balance of inflexible and severe justice; the Son is surrounded with the more winning glories of placability and love. The Father, with the cruelty of a remorseless tyrant, dooms the whole human race to remediless and everlasting wo, to expiate the offence of their original ancestor; the Son, moved by infinite compassion, steps forward to turn aside his almighty wrath by his own death, and, as the price of his blood, is permitted to take a select number of ransomed souls with him to the abodes of heavenly felicity, the rest comprising a large part of mankind, being left to drag out a never-ending existence in sorrows unutterable. It would be strange if doctrines, fitted to leave such impressions on the mind, should nourish that spirit of deep and confiding piety, which looks to the Universal Father as the only refuge of the guilt-burthened and sorrow-stricken soul. But these doctrines Unitarianism rejects as absurd and monstrous fictions. We consider it one mark of its truth and great practical value, that it inculcates those views of God, which tend to render a belief of his all surrounding power and presence, not a chilling and melancholy persuasion, we would, if possible, forever banish from our minds, but a fond and cherished sentiment; one to which the mind naturally turns in sorrow, in weakness, in temptation, and the agony of disease and death; a sentiment, the destruction of which would darken the whole soul, and throw a more than funereal sadness over the universe.

Further, we shall be told, that admitting the efficacy of Christ's sufferings is to be attributed to the will and

acceptance of the Deity, still, the object for which he was suspended on the cross implies his divinity ; that God in selecting an agent to accomplish this object was compelled, by the nature of the case, to fix on one partaking of the attribute of infinity. A finite being, it is said, could not make adequate propitiation for sin, because sin, viewed as committed against an infinite object, has infinite guilt, and therefore requires an infinite atonement, and such atonement could be made only by a being himself infinite.

It can scarcely be necessary to point out the fallacious reasoning, the flimsy, bare-faced sophistry contained in this and similar language, often used for the sake of popular effect.

In the first place, it is a gross abuse of terms to assert, that sin, because committed against an infinite Being, has in any sense, features of infinity. The nature of the object, against whom the offence is committed, aggravates it, only as it implies insensibility, presumption, or perverseness in the offender. To trespass against a Being, who deserves to be loved with all the understanding, soul, and strength, is an offence of an exceedingly dark hue. Still, it is human, it is finite ; it is an act of a finite being, and as such can never partake of the character of infinity.

Besides, if sin is infinite, because committed against an infinite Being, then all and every sin is so, and therefore equal, for infinity admits of no degrees. The consequence is, that he that trespasses once is equally guilty in the sight of God, equally an object of his abhorrence with one, who trespasses with every breath. Nothing can add to the blackness of infinite guilt, nothing increase the load of it ; and thus we hear it sometimes asserted, that

'one sin is sufficient to sink the sinner to the lowest depths of hell.'

A theory encumbered with such difficulties, we need not say, cannot be true. It is opposed to reason, to the common sentiments and common feelings of human nature. It confounds the distinctions of right and wrong, embarrasses our moral faculties, and destroys all confidence in their decisions. We have a new standard of merit and demerit, of virtue and vice, and before our language can become conformed to that standard, our mode of thinking and expressing ourselves on the moral qualities of temper and actions, the whole vocabulary of common life, in fact, as well as of ethics and religion, must undergo a revolution. — But I have bestowed more attention on the argument for the infinite nature of sin than it deserves. The bare statement of it is sufficient to refute it, for it bears the character of extravagance and absurdity on every feature.

I have intimated that the language alluded to, contains in it, in my judgment, barefaced sophistry. In truth, sophistry never appeared under a thinner veil, and I know not whether we ought to be more surprised at its grossness, or at the confidence, bold, unblushing confidence with which it is urged. Christ must have been an infinite being, we are informed, because no other could have made adequate atonement for sin. But would those, who reason thus, be really understood to say that an infinite being breathed out his soul in agony on the cross; that the God of nature was really betrayed, arrested, condemned, and executed as a malefactor, by finite and frail children of dust; that the omnipotent and omnipresent Creator and Preserv-

er of the universe was confined three days in a shroud and tomb furnished by the compassion of his creatures? Expressions implying something equivalent to this, it is true, occur both in older and more modern writings. But we are charitable enough to suppose, that they originate in mere carelessness, or a fondness for gross and overcharged pictures and representations; that were those, who use them, asked whether they meant to assert that God was really fastened to the cross, died, was buried, and the third day rose again, they would disclaim any such intention. The Deity is incapable of suffering. On the supposition, therefore, that Christ possessed a divine, as well as human, nature, he suffered only in the latter, only as man. No infinite nature suffered, or could suffer. Why then talk of an infinite atonement? No such atonement, in the sense in which it is understood by its advocates, was ever made, or could be made. The hypothesis of Christ's divinity does not provide for it, because it furnishes only a finite and human sufferer, and with respect to the satisfaction or atonement, therefore, is reduced to a level with the hypothesis of his simple humanity.

Let us not, then, be told that the object for which Christ died, implies his Divinity. No assertion can be more destitute of foundation, or more outrage reason and common sense. — But I forbear. Enough has been said to show, that the worth and efficacy of our Saviour's instructions and death depend on a consideration entirely foreign from the dignity of his nature.

III. So, too, I observe of the agency he now exercises, of whatever nature it be, it owes its whole interest and importance to the Divine will and appointment. His

inherent divinity is not made the basis of any of those benefits he confers on us, or of any act he performs, in his present state of exaltation, any more than of the benefits derived from his ministry and sufferings on earth. All the glories of that state, all the honors, privileges, and offices it implies, are expressly referred to the Father, 'who *made* him both Lord and Christ' (Acts ii. 36.) — 'who *exalted* him and *gave* him a name' (Phil. ii. 9.) — 'raised him from the dead and *gave* him glory' (1 Pet. i. 21.) 'Appointed him heir of all things,' (Heb. i. 2.) — 'committed all judgment to him,' having 'appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, *by that man whom he hath chosen*, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that *he hath raised him from the dead.*' (John v. 22; Acts xvii. 31.)

Nor are we authorized to say that any of these honors, or any part of this agency, suppose him originally to have partaken of a divine nature. The expressions, in which he is spoken of as having received power to judge the world, admitting that they are to be taken literally, and not as they may be understood, figuratively, as signifying only that we shall be judged according to the laws and spirit of his gospel, are far from implying any attributes strictly infinite. The scriptures certainly never allude to such attributes as necessary to the exercise of this power. They never in the remotest way insinuate, that it was bestowed on him because he possessed an exalted nature. Just the reverse. God 'gave him authority to execute judgment, *because he was the son of man,*' (John v. 27.) partook of our nature, and was, therefore, capable of being 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities.'

Our confidence in the Saviour, then, in what he did and suffered on earth, in what he now performs in heaven, in his past and future ministrations and offices, is inspired solely by a belief of his divine mission. All his sufficiency is of God, who sent him to be the Saviour of the world, and who, we are certain, would not leave him incompetent to the work committed to him. With the magnitude of that work we trust that we are as deeply impressed as are any of our fellow Christians, however they may differ from us in their views of the original attributes of Jesus. But had not God power to commit it to whom he would? Was he restricted in his choice of means? Who shall lay restraints on omnipotence? Who shall say that the universal Father, as the cause and fountain of all capacities and might, cannot clothe the humblest of his offspring with power adequate to accomplish the noblest purpose of his beneficence? Can any instrument be feeble in his hands? Can he not strengthen the weak, and perfect the frail? In providing for our rescue from sin, from suffering, and despair, was he compelled to act only through a particular medium? had he no choice of agents — no ability to raise up and endow whom he would? was he compelled to employ one, who partook of his nature and shared his throne? — Convinced that Jesus was commissioned and sent by him to be the dispenser of his best gifts to man, we think that we have sufficient reason for confiding in him. In doing this, we confide not in mere human, not in angelic and derived power and excellence; we rest on the truth, the wisdom, and beneficence of that great Being who formed, sustains, and fills all things.

The objection so strenuously urged against Unitarianism, that it does not fully meet the wants of the sinner,

does not provide for his pardon and security, thus disappears the moment we examine dispassionately the basis on which, according to the uniform language of the New Testament, our confidence in Jesus is placed. It originates altogether in a misapprehension concerning the ground on which he claims to be heard and trusted. If, divesting our understandings of the influence of popular and received opinions, we sit down calmly, and endeavor to ascertain the ultimate fact or doctrine on which the fabric of our hopes as Christians rests as its main pillar, we shall find that Unitarianism embraces this fact or doctrine, that it builds exclusively upon it, that it never ceases to urge it as the foundation of all our expectations of benefit from the Saviour: It thus has the advantage over all other systems, we think, in its truth, its beautiful simplicity, and its fitness to produce a deep and abiding effect on the heart. Instead of embarrassing our minds and taxing our credulity, by asking us to believe doctrines of which their mysterious, abstruse, and incomprehensible nature is their least obnoxious feature, it points to one great and primary fact or sentiment, which is level to every capacity, and the admission of which is enough to supply the strongest motives and excitements to virtue, enough for safety, for consolation, and for final happiness. — Far from having any tendency to fill the mind of the sinner with despair, it holds the only language which, as it seems to us, is capable of affording him any rational hope and trust. Did it direct his attention to the bought favor of a tyrant, — bought by the incarnation and sufferings of a God, — as the foundation of his safety, he might tell us that it taught a doctrine adapted only to inspire melancholy, distrust and terror. It is

true, he might say to us, you talk to me of a substitute, an exalted and innocent personage, on whom he has spent the swift arrows of his wrath ; and you inform me that he is now appeased, that his justice is satisfied, that he is willing and authorized to forgive. But, meanwhile, what a conception you have taught me to form of God ! What a monster you have held up as an object of my reverence and trust ! Surely, you do not ask me to repose confidence in such a Being. I can view him only with shuddering and horror. The belief that he formed and governs the universe would fill me with gloom, which nothing could effectually alleviate. It would be a truly appalling sentiment, an abhorred persuasion, from which I would willingly take refuge in the less chilling creed of the atheist.

But Unitarianism furnishes other ground of confidence and hope. It soothes and sustains the contrite and burdened spirit by carrying the thoughts up to the one infinite Father, who embraces the whole of his offspring in the arms of his benevolence, and whose unbought compassion raised up and sent Jesus with power to heal and to save. It presents to our anxious minds, a Being in whom our highest and best affections are capable of being concentrated, whom we can venerate, and love, and trust, not on account of what another has done or suffered to render him propitious, but on account of his own everlasting and unchangeable attributes. That such a doctrine should be charged with a tendency to weaken the foundation of the sinner's trust, and add despair to remorse, is really matter of no small surprise and astonishment. To us, we repeat, it appears to address him in the only language which is fitted to yield him

comfort and support. Instead of placing his expectations of pardon on a foundation, which may totter and sink under him, it places them on the only foundation which can never be shaken. The arm on which he leans, is omnipotent, and the rock of his trust the throne of the Eternal.

We are accused of not feeling sufficient veneration for the Saviour, of undervaluing what he has performed for us, of stripping his religion of all its noble and distinguishing attributes, of dimming its glories, and frittering it down to a system of dry, frigid, and lifeless morality. Such charges, we are willing to believe, originate in ignorance and misconception concerning the form in which christianity is received by us. Unitarianism has been misunderstood, or but imperfectly comprehended, by the great mass of those, who have been loudest in abusing and denouncing it. The term has suggested to the minds of its opponents only the vague idea of some monstrous and heart-chilling delusion, something hardly yielding, in impiety, to the imposture of Mahommed, a cunning forgery of Satan, fitted to inflate pride, and favor the indolent and corrupt propensities of the heart, by encouraging trust in human merit, administering opiates, using smooth and honeyed speech, and thus luring its dreamy and self-applauding votaries onward in the broad and downward road of destruction. That persons having these impressions on the subject of Unitarianism should think and speak of it with horror, need not surprise us. It is not, however, Unitarianism which they dread and war against in their minds, but a hideous phantom, a deformed spectre, which has no existence out of their own imaginations. Were Unitarianism understood by them,

we do not say that it would be in all cases approved. This is not to be expected, for it is opposed to some sentiments, which were probably among the first with which their minds were imbued, which struck deep root therefore, and which have been nourished and strengthened by a thousand influences. But we believe that it would be found, in a majority of instances, to coincide with their own views and feelings — those views and feelings, which are intrenched in the deepest recesses of their understanding and hearts — to an extent which would greatly astonish them. We believe that it would find an echo in many breasts, which now shudder at the very name of it ; and that those who should continue to reject it as not conformable to truth, would with few exceptions, view it with diminished horror and alarm. They would find it not that monstrous compound of impiety, folly, and pride, which they have been led to imagine it. They would not, we trust, discover us to be wanting in due veneration for the Saviour, and a due sense of the worth of his religion. — Is it nothing that we venerate him as a being divinely commissioned and sent to be unto us a Prince and a Saviour, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Divinity — through whom God manifested himself, as he had never before manifested himself, to the world — who was the bright effulgence of the Father's glory, and express image, representative, copy or resemblance of his character and person — from whose words, life, and actions, breathed a spirit of divine wisdom and excellence — who was authorized to make known the conditions of human forgiveness — whose doctrines, example, and cross have a quickening and restoring efficacy — who, by the power and truth of God dwelling and operating in

and through him, was rendered able to save to the uttermost ? Is it nothing that we venerate him as we venerate no earthly master — no mere human saviour, guide, example, and reformer — that we regard him as sustaining a character and relations, which entitle him to the homage of all understandings and love of all hearts — that though unseen, we believe, we confide, we rejoice in him as the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Pattern of our charity, and Teacher of ‘ hopes that overstep the grave ?’

Nor do we rob his religion of any of those attributes, which tend to give it power over the mind, and render it a most important instrument of human reform and virtue. We do not subtract from its value and efficacy, as an agent mighty to the pulling down of every strong hold of sin within the breast, able to work powerfully in our hearts, and build us up in faith, in love, and true holiness. We only relieve it, we think, of a load of corrupt doctrines, which have darkened its visage, choked its influence, and arrayed against it some of the most inveterate prejudices of human nature. We take away what is extraneous, that its original and majestic features, its noble simplicity, its life giving energy may be more apparent. We view it not as a mere code of ethics, not as a system of cold, speculative, and earthly morality. We esteem it especially as “a revelation of divine truth, as announcing the doctrine of pardon and life, as a voice of council, of admonition, of encouragement, and hope, issuing from the throne of God’s mercy, and uttering his gracious will and purposes. We value it as the source of all that is most precious in our joys, and soothing in our sorrows — as our weapon of defence in the time of tempta-

tion, the assistant of our weakness, the strengthener of our virtue, the inspirer of noble thoughts and magnanimous deeds — our guide, sanctifier, and friend — the instrument by which we are enabled to overcome the world and the flesh — the great and prime agent in renovating, in refining, and exalting our spirits, and fitting us for a final union with Jesus, and with God, the Father of Jesus.

NOTES.

I. I AM happy to subjoin, in corroboration of the general train of reasoning pursued in the present Tract, the following extracts from a Trinitarian writer so deserving of respect as Bishop Watson.

‘What need is there that we should calumniate and detest one another, because we cannot agree in our notions concerning the person of Christ? He is the *seed of the woman*, whose office it was to bruise the serpent’s head; the *seed of Abraham* in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; the *last Adam*, in whom all were to be made alive; the *Son, whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world*; the *Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*; the Advocate who now liveth to make intercession for us; the Judge, who will at the last day reward every man according to his works; these and many other truths may be predicated concerning Jesus Christ, both by those who admit and by those who deny his pre-existence. His authority as a Teacher is the same, whether you suppose him to have been the Eternal God, or a Being inferior to him, but commissioned by him, for the Gospel of Christ, whatever you may determine concerning the person of Christ, is certainly sealed with the finger of God. We are under the same obligation to obey the precepts of the gospel, are incited to obedience by the same hopes, deterred from disobedience by the same fears, whether we believe Jesus of Nazareth to have been co-eternal with the first source of all Being, or to have been a man miraculously conceived, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.’ — *Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Landaff in 1784.*

‘If God thought fit to accept for our redemption any price, there is nothing, that we know of, but his own wisdom, which could determine what price he would accept. Hence I see no difficulty in admitting, that the death of an angel, or of a mere man might have been the price which God fixed upon. The *Socinians* contend, that Christ was a man, who had no existence before he was born of Mary; but they seem to me not to draw a just consequence, when from thence they infer, that an atonement could not have been made for the sins of mankind by the death of Jesus. The *Arians* maintain, that Jesus had an existence before he was born of Mary; and there is no reason for thinking, that the death of such a being might not have made an atonement for the sins of mankind. All depends upon the appointment of God; and if instead of the death of a super-angelic, of an angelic, or of a human being, God had fixed on any other instrument as a medium of restoring man to immortality, it would have been highly improper in us to have quarrelled with the mean, which his goodness had appointed, merely because we could not see how it was fitted to attain the end.’ — *Charge delivered* 1795.

II. I observed, (page 23.) that expressions implying that an infinite nature suffered, frequently occur in Trinitarian writers. Indeed the general strain of the language and reasoning employed by Trinitarians on the subject of the death of Christ is adapted to leave such an impression on the mind. If this impression is not designed, the expressions and reasoning alluded to, must be regarded as peculiarly unfortunate, and it is time they were discarded. But they are necessary, perhaps, to uphold the popular notion of the atonement, and gratify a love of the obscure, the marvellous, and strange. I might fill pages with specimens from writers above the ordinary level of modern scribblers for religious Magazines and Newspapers. Dr. Barrow, whose claim to rank in the class of old English Divines with Hooker and Taylor is fully settled, speaks of the ‘immensity of worth and efficacy, which must needs accrue to the death of our Saviour — from his being God.’ ‘That the immortal God should die,’ he adds with singular infelicity, ‘as it cannot be heard without wonder, so it could not be undertaken without huge reason, nor accomplished without mighty effect.’ Works, vol. ii. p. 290, Ed. Lon. 1716. Thus absurdly can men of the profoundest understandings, think and reason when fettered by the influence of theological systems.

1st Series.

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APOLOGIES
FOR
INDIFFERENCE
TO
RELIGION AND ITS INSTITUTIONS
EXAMINED.

BY SAMUEL BARRETT,

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APOLOGIES, &c.

It is my purpose in the following pages to offer a few remarks, such as it appears to me the times call for, on some of the apologies which certain persons occasionally make for not cherishing and manifesting a due interest in religion and its institutions. My readers will indulge me, I trust, in that plainness of speech and that directness of address, which, in the discussion of such topics, are both natural and useful.

What is religion? It is the convictions, sentiments, and actions, which befit man's relation to God and the spiritual world. What are the institutions of religion? They are the outward means, sanctioned directly or indirectly by divine wisdom and goodness, whereby those convictions are produced and strengthened, those sentiments are awakened and nourished, and those actions are prompted and perfected. What is it to cherish and manifest a due interest in religion and its institutions? The elements of a sufficient answer may be found within the sphere of men's secular pursuits. Look into the

house of merchandise, the mechanic's shop, the manufactory, the harvest field. What do you witness? Do you see minds faithless, so that they will not devise plans? Do you see hearts cold, so that they will not prompt to action? Do you see hands idle, so that they will not keep the wheels of business moving? Very little of this do you witness, and less of it do you hear any body approve. Men are not apt to be skeptical, indifferent, or sluggish, when worldly good is their object. This they know well enough how to prize, and any institution for securing this, they are ready enough to foster. When wealth, with its attendant advantages, is in prospect, what expense of thought will they not incur; what amount of feeling will they not bestow; what wear and tear of bone and muscle and fibre will they not endure, rather than fail of success. Then everything pertaining to the man, within and without, is activity, energy, zeal. Such it is to cherish and manifest a strong interest in secular pursuits. And like unto this is the interest men ought to cherish and manifest in regard to religion and its institutions.

Now, why is it otherwise with many? What are the reasons they allege for indifference to the whole subject of religion? What are the apologies they offer for excluding God, and a future life, and Christ, and all the realities of the spiritual world, from the number of those objects which they allow most strongly to engage their thoughts and feelings. What are the grounds on which they attempt to justify themselves in refusing to do anything for the support of religion and its institutions? I shall not undertake to state them all. I may not name even the most common ones. But I invite your attention to some of the excuses I have heard given,

and which, as they pass current with a class of persons in almost every community, deserve to have their unreasonableness shown. To begin then :

‘There is nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth obliging us to support religion and its institutions ; and so we do not mean to have much to do either with the one or the other.’ This is the sort of apology which some persons are beginning to make. But with what shadow of a good reason ? How shall I address these people ? Nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth *obliging* you ! And has it come to this, that men, living in the nineteenth century, — in a civilized land, — in a christian community, — descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, — can hold up their heads, under the light of day, amidst their fellow-citizens, and confess, without a burning blush, that they mean to do nothing more than they are *obliged* to do ? Nothing in the *laws of the Commonwealth* ! What of that ? Are there no other laws binding on you ? Not to speak of the laws of God in Holy Scripture, — what say you to the *natural* laws of self-protection, justice, benevolence ? Why, I should as soon expect a man would say, he did not mean to provide for his family, did not mean to help his neighbor raise the frame of a house or barn, did not mean to go to a town-meeting, because there is nothing in the laws of the Commonwealth obliging him to it.

What are the laws of the Commonwealth, that you should resolve to do no more than they enjoin ? Beyond and above all human enactments, stand the laws written by God on the heart, which no man can transgress with impunity. One of these is, that we be good and do good to the extent of our ability. Will any body

stake his reputation for intelligence and sound principle upon a denial of this ? I think not. Well now, let me put to you this question : — In order to your being and doing good to the extent of your ability, are not religion and its institutions needed ? Are not they useful ? useful to yourselves ? useful to the community ? If any one says, no, then he belongs to a class whom it was not my purpose to address under this head. If he says, yes, then I ask him, — How can you justify it to your *conscience*, that you mean not to have anything to do with religion and its institutions ? It is idle to plead the absence of all statutory law on the subject. The law written on the heart exists, which binds you to be and do good to the extent of your ability ; and so long as you *believe* religion and its institutions to be useful, you are *obliged* by the law of conscience to take an interest in, and to foster them, as far as you can. Yes, it is an affair of conscience. In a case like this, you *must* follow the dictates of your settled belief. If you do otherwise, if you act contrary to those dictates, if, while thoroughly convinced of the great utility of religion and its institutions, you refuse to have anything to do either with the one or the other, I see not how you can answer it to your conscience, your country, or your God.

‘ But we helped build the meeting-house, we pay our proportion of the minister’s salary, we contribute liberally for the support of public worship ; and this, we think, is pretty well for us, without our trying to feel much interest in religion and its institutions.’ Such is the apology of a second class of persons. Not a few seem to act upon the principle it involves. But is it reasonable so to do ? Why, let me ask these men, have you done what you

have? why assisted to erect a church, to pay the preacher, and so forth? 'Because these things are good and useful.' But good and useful for whom? 'For the people.' But are not *you* a part of the people? 'Yes. Are not your nature, relations, and wants the same with those of your fellow-men? 'Yes.' Do not you need, as well as they, the benefit of religion and its institutions? 'Yes; and we expect to get it.' But how? By treating them with coldness and indifference? How do you suppose the *people*, for whom you profess to have so tender a concern, are to be benefited by religion and its institutions? 'Oh! *they* of course must feel an interest in them, if they would be profited.' But are not you subject to the same law of cause and effect? Will *apathy* fit you, while nothing but *earnestness* can fit them, for the blessed influences of the Gospel? As true might it be said, the light and warmth of the sun would precisely the same changes in the dead plant, that they do in the living one.

Besides, consider your *example*. Has it weight? So far as it has any, it goes to reduce those very people, for whom you boast having done so much, to a like state of coldness and indifference with yourselves; and then when by and by, will be the advantage you expected *they* to derive? And suppose all were to take your course as all have an equal right to do;—there would be meeting-houses, but none to fill them; there would be ministers, but none to hear them; there would be religious institutions, but none to profit by them; there would be Christianity in books, but none of it in the hearts and lives of men. Is this a consummation to be wished? Yet you are doing all you can to bring about.

Then, too, what glaring *inconsistency* does not your conduct all along betray? Do you manage in any other affair, as you do in religion? Do you buy a farm, or fill a store, or erect a manufactory, and keep it in order, year after year, and all the while feel no interest in it? look for none of its legitimate results? never claim your own share of the profits? And yet, forsooth, you can help build a church, and pay towards the support of a minister, and assist in keeping the whole machinery of christian services in operation, and then *rest* in this; rest in the *means* without a thought or feeling about the *end*; — and, what aggravates your folly, can boastingly say, ‘we think we have done pretty well, though we do cherish no hearty interest in religion and its institutions.’ I want words to express my sense of such people’s unworthiness.

‘But there is so much difference of opinion and so many controversies about religion, that we do not care to feel any strong interest in it or in its institutions.’ This is a third apology. Many urge it. But can there be anything more unreasonable? Suppose men were to act upon this principle in other matters; to what an extreme of destitution would they not bring themselves! Are there *any* great objects of human pursuit about which there are no differences of opinion, no controversies? Very few indeed. To be consistent, therefore, these objectors must abandon nearly every pursuit. But do they so?

There are differences of opinion and controversies about the methods of tilling the soil; do men on this account abjure agriculture? There are differences of

opinion and controversies as to the best modes of mercantile business ; are men, in consequence, seen to shut up their counting rooms, unrig their ships, stop their banks, and cease from all traffic ? There are differences of opinion and controversies touching the science of medicine and the art of surgery ; do people therefore resolve not to have their broken bones set, nor their diseased bodies prescribed for ? There are differences of opinion and controversies concerning politics ; but does any wise man, on this ground, think himself justified in not feeling any concern for the government, its agents, or the laws ? There are differences of opinion and controversies in respect to education ; yet who would be so foolish as for any such reason, to become indifferent to the institutions of learning, and suffer his children to grow up in ignorance ?

And so I might affirm and interrogate in regard to a thousand things, which nobody dreams of neglecting, on the ground, that men differ in opinion and dispute about them. Now, what I have to ask is, why not be at least as reasonable in matters pertaining to religion ? Why turn away from this, the greatest and best of objects, merely because its teachers and professors do not agree in thought and word on all the points of doctrine and practice it involves ? That man ought to cover his face for shame, who can be guilty of such inconsistency.

‘ But there is so much uncertainty in religion, that we do not feel inclined to take any great interest in its doctrines or in its institutions.’ This fourth apology many of us have heard. But surely they who offer it must be wanting either in information, considerateness, or candor.

Uncertainty in religion ! What am I to understand by this ? Is it meant, that religion has not the support of mathematical demonstration ? But religion is one of those subjects, which, from their very nature, do not admit of this sort of proof. Why demand an impossibility ?

Again, what are the grounds on which you decide and act in other matters ? The grounds of mathematical demonstration ? No, but those of moral evidence — of testimony for instance — such precisely as we adduce to establish the truth of Christianity. Do you never go to law ? Yes, and you risk your fortunes, your lives, on its decisions. But there is no such thing as mathematical demonstration in the law. All its proofs are of a moral kind, such as are brought to substantiate the facts of revealed religion. And just so it is in all the ordinary affairs of life ; men do not refuse to decide and act, till they have demonstrative evidence that this or that course of conduct is the true and the best one. Why should they do otherwise in religion ?

Nor is this all. It is within the limits of strict truth to say, that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, have for their support a body of probable evidence ten times stronger than what justifies you, and the multitude of your fellow-men, in the prosecution of many of those schemes of business, in which you and they hesitate not to engage with the utmost confidence and zeal. Nay more. Advert again to the law ; and I will venture to affirm, that if you were to search the records of judicial proceedings from time immemorial, you would not find, in one case out of a hundred, anything comparable, in point of strength, to the proofs which may be adduced in support of the lead-

ing facts of the New Testament. Now if it be so, what gross inconsistency there is, to say nothing of the wickedness of it, in urging the uncertainty of religion as a reason for being indifferent to its claims.

‘ But religion has so much mystery about it, that we are not disposed to feel much interest in it or in its institutions.’ This is the fifth apology. What shall I say to it? **Mystery!** Why, is there anything about which there is not mystery? If we care for nothing but what is unconnected with mystery, we shall care for very little. Look where we will among the objects of creation, or the events of Providence; everywhere we shall find mystery. Are we therefore to feel no interest in these objects and events? *Do* we feel no interest in them? Not so. Every day we see things, every day we witness occurrences, concerning the *how* and *why* of which we know just nothing at all. But we are not, on this account, indifferent to them. The mystery, deep as it is, does not prevent us from feeling and acting with reference to those things and those occurrences. *How* and *why* does the magnetic needle point to the north pole? No one knows; but this mystery does not cause men to cease making and using the mariner’s compass. *How* and *why* does the electric fluid choose to travel on iron rather than on silk? No one knows; but this mystery does not hinder men from constructing and profiting by lightning rods. *How* and *why* does all matter tend to the earth or to the centre of the earth? No one knows; but this mystery does not prevent men, in their use of matter, from acting according to the law of gravitation.

And thus I might go on questioning without end. Everywhere in the world's objects and events there is mystery; yet everywhere are men interested and active. Why? Because there are, nevertheless, facts and truths enough known to engage their minds and hearts; and because also the mysterious parts are of little or no practical importance. So in religion. Suppose there was a hundred fold more mystery than the objector himself imagines; still there would be facts and truths enough that are perfectly simple, clear, and plain, for all useful purposes; and besides, the mysterious parts would probably be of little or no practical moment. Let it even be conceded, that all which the most extravagant have alleged of mysteries in religion, is strictly true; still there would be no more mystery in religion than there has been supposed to be in nature; and therefore to be void of interest in religion, because of its mysteries, would be at least as unreasonable as to be void of interest in nature, because of its mysteries.

But I go farther, and say, that in *revealed* religion there are, strictly speaking, no mysteries, — not one. It is true, revealed religion treats upon subjects *about which* there is much that is mysterious, i. e. *unknown*. But mark the distinction; — that which is thus mysterious *about* those subjects does not make any part of *revealed* religion; for what has been once revealed is, of course, no longer unknown, no longer a secret, no longer a mystery. For instance; many questions may be started *about* God, *about* Christ, *about* heaven, *about* hell, which revelation does not answer, and which therefore must continue involved in mystery. But revelation does not *profess* to an-

swer these questions ; all that revelation professes to teach it does teach ; and in this, i. e. in the actual revelation, there is no mystery.

And precisely the same may be said of all the subjects treated upon in the Sacred Scriptures. Many questions may be asked *about* these subjects which cannot be answered, which are still shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, every fact and every truth which revelation professes to teach, it does teach ; and this, the actual revelation, so far from being a matter unknown, a secret, a mystery, is a simple, clear, intelligible proposition. In short, the region of mystery is not that of revelation, but that of non-revelation. And he, whoever he may be, that undertakes to apologise for his lack of interest in Christianity on the ground that it does not explain everything his wayward fancy may chance to fix upon, is as unreasonable, as would be the man who should affect to be indifferent to the light and heat of the sun, because of certain little dark spots he spies on its disk, the *why* and *wherefore* of which are mysteries to him.

‘ But religion is so unnatural a thing that we feel ourselves justified in not cherishing much love for it or for its institutions.’ Here we have a sixth apology. A false theology has contributed to make it a common one. Yet there never was a more groundless pretence. Religion unnatural ! whence came the thought ? Not from the study of the history of mankind ; for this teaches that no sentiment has been more prevalent, from the first ages to the present, than the religious sentiment. And surely, that which is thus co-extensive with the race is not hastily to be pronounced unnatural. Whence came the thought ? Not from thorough acquaintance with the

principles of human nature; for they who have gone most deeply into investigations of this kind have, almost without exception, acknowledged that there is, in the depths of the soul, that which longs for, and seeks after something out of and above itself, which we call God; and something higher and more enduring than the present life, which we call Immortality.

How is it then, that there are persons who deem religion an unnatural thing? The question is easily answered. Men are apt to judge of matters according to their own peculiar tastes; and as some happen to have little or no taste for religion themselves, they fancy it to be what mankind at large have not a relish for — what human nature itself revolts at. But how comes it that any get this distaste for religion, if, as I maintain, religion is so natural to man? Let me answer the question, by asking another: — How comes it that any get a distaste for other things, universally acknowledged to be natural; such, for instance, as activity, society, friendship? There are those who seem to dislike even these. Why? Not because their nature is adverse; not because they were endowed with no original tendencies to activity, society, and friendship; but because their nature, their original tendencies, have, in some way or other, been neglected, thwarted, or abused in these respects. Parents and instructors did not draw out and give a right direction to the inborn principles of activity, society, and friendship, in this class of persons, when young; or they themselves, as they grew up, neglected or abused these principles, and so have become what they are. But have these haters of activity, society, and friendship, any good reason, therefore, to pronounce it

unnatural to mankind to be active, social and friendly ? No one in his senses will pretend it.

Just so in respect to religion. A man has no good reason for calling this unnatural, merely because he finds little or nothing in it accordant with his own feelings ; nor, I will add, for calling it so on any account. The truth is, it is not religion, but irreligion that is unnatural. It is not they who respect, love, and practice piety, that act contrary to the original tendencies and impulses of human nature, but they who prefer and practice impiety. Yes, the irreligious man as truly acts an unnatural part, as he does, who hates his father and mother.

‘ But religion has been the cause of such evils in the world, that we deem it safest to keep as much as possible aloof from it and its institutions.’ This is the seventh apology. But of what evils has religion been the *cause* ? I know that many evils have accompanied the progress of religion in all ages ; but was religion the cause of them ? Would there have been fewer such evils as the objector has in view, if there had never been any religion in the world ? I am told of wars ; but would there have been fewer wars, if religion had not existed ? I am told of heartburnings and enmities ; but are not these at least as frequent and bitter where there is little religion, as where there is much ? I am told of enthusiasm and fanaticism ; but there are these, and have been these, as violent, not to say more so, about politics and some other matters, as about religion. I am told of persecutions ; but men have persecuted, and do persecute still, without a thought of religion. The truth is, it is unjust to say that religion has been the cause of such evils ; for they would have

existed without it. The proper statement is, not that religion has been the *cause* of them, but that it has been *a subject about which* men's passions have been set on fire. These passions would have burned as fiercely, to say the least of them, about other things, had religion never visited the earth.

Nor am I restricted to so limited a ground of defence. I am authorized by history and observation to affirm, that it is owing to religion, more than to anything else, that the very evils adduced, have not been ten times worse than they actually have been. But suppose it were not so; suppose on the contrary that religion has occasioned, in one way or another, some evils in the world, surely no one will affirm that they are the direct, legitimate result of pure religion; for if anything under heaven is true, it is this, that the direct, legitimate result of pure religion is peace, and good-will, and general virtue. The only way in which religion can have, in any degree, occasioned evil to mankind, is that of its abuse. But every one must acknowledge the unreasonableness of rejecting a good thing merely for its abuse. On this principle, everything must be rejected—even the air we breathe, the water we drink, the fire that warms us; for what has not been abused?

‘But if religion be not responsible for the evils that have followed in its train, still we do not see that it does much good; and so cannot feel any great interest in it or in its institutions.’ This is the eighth apology, and the last I shall notice. Several persons are beginning to talk in this strange way; but is it with any show of reason or good sense? Are there not many things deemed

most precious by us, the utility of which we cannot see? But I will not insist upon this. What is it, let me ask these persons, what is it that in your opinion does do good? 'Why, everything does good that promotes human virtue and happiness.' Very well; so far we are agreed; I am glad to find you disposed to take so high a ground. Everything then does good that promotes human virtue and happiness. Now let me put another question; — Can you seriously think that religion, or a true regard to God and a future world, does not promote human virtue and happiness? 'We doubt whether it does.' But on what account — for what reasons do you doubt? 'Why, there are persons of our acquaintance who make no *profession* of religion; and yet they appear to be virtuous and happy enough.' But why do you thus *assume* that where there is no profession there is no religion? There are many, how many you cannot tell, who keep their religion concealed; they worship God in secret; they meditate on eternity in secret; and from this their secret piety derive strength to their virtues and fulness to their satisfactions.

'Yes, but we are acquainted with persons who not only make no open profession of religion, but do not even pay any attention to it in secret; and yet they seem virtuous and happy enough.' Indeed! how do you know that they pay no attention to religion in secret? Are you always with them? Can you discern their inmost thoughts? But not to dwell on this; what if it be true of some, that they pay no particular attention to religious subjects *now*? It does not follow that they *never* have done so; and of course it does not follow that their virtue and happiness owe nothing to their piety.


Were not these persons religiously educated? Now the effects of education are not soon lost. The early impressions of God, of his providence, of another world, are not easily effaced. They dwell in the soul long after the individual has ceased to give, consciously, any particular attention to religion; and from these impressions much that is virtuous and happy in those to whom you refer me may have been derived. Nor only so. It is to be remembered that these moral and happy men, whom you bring to prove the uselessness of religion, live in a religious community, breathe a religious atmosphere, and therefore can hardly avoid having their habits of virtue, and consequently their happiness, influenced in some degree, by religious sentiments. Though they take no special pains to cherish these sentiments themselves, yet their characters and conduct and satisfactions may be greatly, though insensibly, affected by religion, in an indirect manner, through sympathy with others and the power of public opinion.

‘Ah! but we have known a man who was so far from either professing religion publicly, or seeming to pay any attention to it in secret, that he actually stood forth its declared hater and decided opposer.’ And do you here refer me to one who believed not in the existence of a God, nor in the fact of a future life, — one who saw not in all this wisely constituted world the traces of Divine wisdom, nor in all the sources of joy around him the marks of Divine beneficence, — one who had no belief in anything beyond the present scene of things, but supposed that all distinctions of virtue and vice, even the soul itself, will be as nothing when the breath leaves the body? Is it such a man you bring to

prove that human virtue and happiness do not depend at all on religion? But are you sure he was in his right mind? Can you avouch for his soundness of intellect? There are no extravagances into which the human imagination will not sometimes run, in moments of mental hallucination. Do you say he was sane? Then I ask if he was virtuous and happy? Suppose me to grant, for a moment, that he was;—in what degree? was he as much so as he might have been, had he not parted with the thought of God and immortality? Impossible in the nature of things, if he possessed the essential attributes of humanity. Virtuous and happy as he was, a pure religion *must* have made him more so. And as to the measure of virtue and happiness he did attain—how came he by so much as this? Surely it was not in *consequence* of his infidelity,—it was in *spite* of his infidelity. But could one man in a thousand, with his principles, have escaped vice and misery? Why was *he* able to succeed so well, without religion? Was it not owing to something peculiar in his outward circumstances, or in his internal organization, or in both? Was it not because his condition in life had always been such as to exempt him, in a remarkable degree, from the world's temptations and sorrows? Was it not because he was differently constituted, in mind and heart, from ninety-nine-hundredths of his fellowmen? Why then bring *him* to prove the inutility of religion? It is to argue from the exception instead of the general rule. It is somewhat like saying that because the Springfield somnambulist could see to read with her eyes shut, therefore almost every body can do so too. Can *mankind at large* do without

religion ? 'This is the question ; and it avails nothing towards determining it, to cite a rare case of an individual, who, because he was singularly organized or placed in extraordinary circumstances, contrived, for a time, to be tolerably virtuous and happy without its aid.

But I have not yet done with the individual. Again I ask, was he virtuous and happy ? Are you willing to lay your hand on your heart, and declare to me that you know he was a virtuous and a happy man ? I strongly suspect he was not. I suspect, if you could have followed his way a little, you would have found him an immoral and an unhappy man. Let it be, if you insist upon it, that he was honest in his common dealings and amiable in promiscuous society ; this, public opinion or a regard to worldly interest might have prompted him to. But — and this is the great question — but are you certain he was pure and holy in secret ? Would you have intrusted him with your most cherished treasure where the eye of the world could not follow him ? Was he the man to whom you would have willingly committed your wife for protection, and your children for education ? But why not, if religion does nothing for virtue ? There are hundreds of your religious acquaintances to whom you would not hesitate a moment to do this. Let it be, too, if you insist upon it, that he appeared happy, even joyous, when abroad, in the open day, amidst the crowd, where he felt that he had a part to act, and was ambitious to seem gay as the gayest. This it is not uncommon for the miserable to practise from various motives. But — and this again is the great question — but are you certain that he suffered nothing from his unbelief, in his solitary hours ? Was it no source of pain to him, do



you think, that go where he would, he could not discern in the wide world, a single mark of an all perfect, all pervading Spirit, his Creator, his Benefactor, his Father, tender and compassionate, before whom he could open his heart with filial trust and affection? Was it no source of pain to him, do you think, that when he looked forward, as he sometimes must, he could not catch the least ray of hope as to an existence beyond the confine of the present world; but must calculate on utter annihilation, at a period not far distant at the most — possibly very near him — at any rate one to which every moment was bringing him closer and closer?

Besides, my friend, did you ever see this man in trouble? and did he sustain it nobly? Did you ever see this man beside a dying child, wife, friend? and would you, for the universe, have exchanged the Christian's consolations for his? Did you ever see this man assailed by a strong temptation to swerve from the rules of rectitude for the sake of great gain in prospect? and did he resist it firmly? Did you ever see this man prostrate on a sick bed, the gates of the grave fast opening before him? and was he unappalled? — was he calm? — was he happy? Did you ever see this man — but I forbear the painful question. Let a veil be thrown over the last scene of him, who knew no God, and who had no hope of immortality! — 'There are other and more grateful topics for our thoughts.

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness! Then why is it so clear that we were created to be religious? How has it come to pass that we have as much evidence of a capacity for religion, as of a capacity for anything? Why does man

carry within himself a natural sentiment of piety — an inborn instinct, if I may so speak, for God and immortality, which has manifested itself, in one form or another, in all ages and in all nations ?

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness ! Then why does the outward creation seem contrived as if on purpose to awaken and nourish the pious feelings ? Why does the extent and grandeur of the universe speak to man, in language which he cannot resist, of the wisdom and power of the Creator ? Why is it that in every vegetable, in every animal, especially in the beneficent suitableness of all things, within, above, and around him, to his wants, he cannot but discern proofs of a Father's providence and love ? And why, moreover, is the whole course of the divine government fitted to fortify his convictions, from other sources derived, that the present life is but the infancy of his being — that there will, must be, another state of existence for the completion of what, it is so clear, the Father of our spirits designed should only be commenced on earth ?

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness ! Then why have we the united testimony of hundreds, of thousands, of millions, nay, of all who have experienced religion's true power, that every feeling of piety to God, and every hope of a future life, are precisely what man needs ; are suited to fill up in his soul what else would be a painful void ; are adapted to support, comfort, encourage, and ennoble him ? Surely, if actual experiment, — experiment tried by multitudes, tried long, and tried in every possible combination of circumstances, has decided any question, it

has determined this, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that religion, pure and undefiled, is essential to the perfection of human nature.

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness ! Then why such an expense of special means on the part of the Infinite and Eternal ? Why God's wonderful dealings with his chosen people, the Jews ? Why that long line of prophecy, not yet completely fulfilled ? Why the extraordinary mission, life, death, and resurrection of the Saviour of the world ? Why the remarkable succession of apostles, and reformers, and martyrs, and the surprising spread and triumphs of Christianity, — all indicating, in a manner not to be mistaken, a power and wisdom above nature, and operating for the moral good of our race ?

Religion and its institutions of little or no importance to human virtue and happiness ! Whence, then, this irresistible argument to prove the essential importance of religion, especially of Christianity, to the best interests of man,—to wit, that in *whatever* direction we look, whether to nations or smaller communities, we find, without a single exception I think, that where religion is least known and least felt, there the people are most degraded ; and where religion is best understood and best applied to practice, in its own purity and power, there the people are most highly elevated in point of intelligence, virtue, and happiness ?

Brethren, what considerations are these, and such as these, to awaken in us all a due interest in religion and its sacred institutions ! It only remains in conclusion, to adjure you, solemnly and affectionately, by all that

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is to be feared and loved in Almighty God ; by all that is worthy of admiration and gratitude in Jesus Christ ; by all that is beautiful and sublime in piety and virtue ; by all that gives peace and joy on earth, and fits for happiness in heaven,—so to regard, henceforward, whatever pertains to religion and its institutions, as that, through their blessed influences, you may be made partakers, both in the present and the future world, of that high intellectual, moral, *spiritual* excellence and enjoyment, which God hath promised to the faithful, and which alone are worthy the chief aim of immortal beings.









